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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXIX, Issue No. 1

www.saipantribune.com | THURSDAY JANUARY 3, 2019 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

75¢

FBI arrests man wanted for arms sales violations. PAGE 2

Jan. 15 is the last day to apply for DUA. PAGE 7

PUBLIC LAND LEASES

40 years, plus 15 years OK'd

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Acting governor Victor B. Hocog enacted last Monday a Senate bill that increases public land lease terms to 40 years, and allows an extension of 15 years—for a total of 55 years. The new law, Public Law 20-84, also authorizes extending existing lease terms to 55 years.

Based on the new law, the Department of Public Lands is now authorized to negotiate new public land leases from existing lessees under new terms and conditions without publishing a request for proposal.

» Hocog asks Legislature to amend new law

Hocog

Hyatt Regency Saipan is among the hotels that will benefit from the new law, having a lease that's expiring in December 2021. Its management is hoping their lease will be extended so they could move forward with plans to renovate the hotel. Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan also has an expiring lease. The lease of Mariana Resort and Spa has already lapsed before the bill's passage.

Saipan Tribune tried to get

See 40 YEARS on Page 4

Legislative fix for IR parole

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Legislation could save the status of 2,000 workers affected by the termination of the CNMI parole program last week.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has already given a a 180-day period—or until June 2019—to those affected to transition or seek other legal status; otherwise they will need to leave the CNMI for good.

Those affected by USCIS' decision to discontinue the program are immediate relatives of U.S. citizens and other stateless individuals, CNMI permanent residents and their immediate relatives, immediate relatives of citizens of Freely Associated States (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands,

See PAROLE on Page 4

4 babies ring in New Year

Mother Rose Marie Borja, right, and father Vincent Pangelinan care for their newborn Alei'a Pangelinan, one of four 2019 New Year babies, for a photo last Jan. 1, 2018.

ERWIN ENCINARES

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth started off the New Year in record fashion, with four newborns helping the CNMI ring in the new year last Jan. 1.

It was the third infant, however, Alei'a Pangelinan, who became the official New Year baby, making her the recipient of a company's giveaway of baby products.

Pangelinan is the eighth child of proud parents Rose Marie Borja and Vincent Pangelinan, who are residents of Dandan and are 33 and 37 years old, respectively. The newborn was delivered naturally at 6:25am and weighed a healthy 7.7 lbs, after only two hours of labor.

"She is going to learn fast," said the proud father.

Vincent Pangelinan believes so since their daughter prior to Alei'a was reportedly mature for her age.

"She is very mature," Rose Pangelinan said of her second youngest daughter, who is 3 years old.

Rose Pangelinan is a housewife; Vincent Pangelinan works at gas company IP&E.

Rose Pangelinan's firstborn is now 16 years old

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The #MarianasStrong Year-end Celebration at the Paseo de Marianas drew a large crowd.

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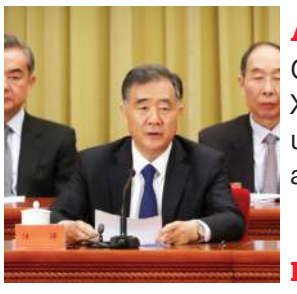

ASIA
Chinese President Xi Jinping urges the unification of China and Taiwan.

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Local

FBI arrests man wanted in Florida for arms violations conspiracy

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested on Saipan last Saturday a 72-year-old Russian national who had been indicted in Florida in 2017 for alleged involvement in a conspiracy to illegally ship military items to Russia.

Dmitrii Makarenko was served with an arrest warrant on Saturday at 3am. No other details were available as of yesterday as to why the defendant is on Saipan.

Last Monday, Makarenko appeared in the U.S. District Court for the NMI for his initial court appearance, accompanied by private counsel Tiberius Mocanu and an interpreter.

According to records filed with the U.S. District Court for the NMI, a grand jury sitting in the Southern District of Florida returned an indictment against Makarenko, also known as Dmitryi, on June 15, 2017, charging him with one count of conspiracy to export defense articles without a license, and two counts of money laundering.

Based on the indictment, on that same day of June 15, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida issued a warrant for his arrest.

Assistant U.S. attorney Garth R. Backe asked the court for an order o transfer Makarenko to Florida.

Mocanu said Makarenko speaks relatively good English but the interpreter is there if things get confusing and that he does not oppose being transferred to Florida.

Mocanu had no objection to the government's motion for temporary detention and stated that his client would be waiving an identify hearing.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona stated that, for purposes of identification, the defendant before the court is, in fact, Makarenko.

Mocanu, however, asked that Makarenko's spouse be allowed to visit him at the

See MANGLONA on Page 4

Apatang sets deadlines for debris pick up

The Saipan Mayor's Office is getting ready to set deadlines for the official end of their Super Typhoon Yutu debris pick up.

Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang told *Saipan Tribune* over the weekend that they are getting ready to announce a deadline for villages to put out their debris, ultimately ending the Saipan Mayor's Office's cleanup efforts.

"We are putting out a deadline for the villages so that people could continue putting out their debris," Apatang said, adding that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has given his office until Jan. 15, 2019, to conclude the debris pick up efforts.

"Every village gets two days to put out their debris and then we would come around and pick them up," he said.

Apatang noted that San Jose's deadline to put out its debris for collection is Jan. 3, 2019, when his office would roam the area to pick up the debris. The Susupe area follows, where his office would pick up the debris on Jan. 7, 2019; Chalan Kanoa's pick up would be on Jan. 9, 2019; Chalan Piao going to San Antonio has the deadlines of Jan. 10, 2019, and Jan. 11, 2019 respectively.

"We would be going to Koblerville on Jan. 12, 2019, maybe Jan. 13, 2019, and then we would go by Dandan and San Vicente on Jan. 14 and Jan. 15, 2019," he said.

"We would continue as long as there is a disaster cleanup and as long as Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has not rescinded the disaster cleanup order [but]… FEMA's [deadline] is on Jan. 15, 2019," he added.

Apatang noted that residents who do not comply with the deadline would have to bring the debris to the staging area in As Lito themselves.

"They had since Oct. 24, 2018. We have been putting announcements on the radio [in various languages]," he noted. "You need to start taking out your debris," adding that the debris must be segregated among roofing tins, wood, green waste, and more.

"Clean up around your yards, put them out [onto the side of the street] and we would pick them up," the mayor said. "We can work together if they want their stuff picked up; otherwise they are stuck with it," he said. ***(Erwin Encinares)***

LEASE TERM EXTENDED
Acting governor Victor Hocog, third from left, is joined by lawmakers led by Senate President and lieutenant governor-elect Arnold I. Palacios, fourth from right, after signing into law Senate Bill 20-35 last Monday. The new law increases the term of public land leases to 40 years plus an extension up to 15 years and authorizes the Department of Public Lands to negotiate a new public land leases. Authored by Palacios, this bill becomes Public Law 20-84.
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Defense: OAG-appointed expert is no expert

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The lawyer of a man being accused of rape has questioned the qualifications of the Office of the Attorney General's expert and argues that he is no expert.

Defense lawyer Bruce Berline, who is representing Manolo Romolor, argues that the OAG's appointed expert, Dr. Deary, is not an expert and questions if he is qualified to testify as a sexual assault medical examiner. Court records only identified the physician as Dr. Deary.

Berline said his client does not question Dr. Deary's qualifications as an obstetrician or gynecologist and does not challenge Dr. Deary's ability to testify as a fact witness.

Berline wants the court allow Dr. Deary to testify as a "fact witness," but not as an expert in the field of forensic sexual assault medical examinations.

"The information provided shows that Dr. Deary attended one training in December 2017. It is not clear how many sexual assault examinations Dr. Deary has performed," said Berline.

The OAG argues that a sexual assault medical examiner's qualification to be an expert should be assessed from the standpoint of actual experience and currency in the field rather than an academic degree.

Berline said that, even under the view taken by the OAG, Dr. Deary's medical qualifications do not qualify him by itself to be an expert in the field of sexual assault examination and neither does his limited training and experience.

Manolo Palencia Romolor was arrested on charges of sexual assault in the first degree, assault and battery, and disturbing the peace.

Police said Romolor admitted sexually assaulting the victim and that he only stopped when their other friend punched him thrice.

According to the victim, she had attended a small party at a friend's apartment when the incident happened in 2016.

The victim said she took five shots of liquor and that she became drunk and her friend's wife helped her inside her bedroom where she slept.

While sleeping, the victim felt someone on top of her but thought it was her boyfriend. She then remembered that her boyfriend was off-island. When she looked up, she saw Romolor on top of her. The victim told Romolor to stop, but the suspect continued sexually assaulting her. She said Romolor kissed her hard, causing a small cut on her upper lip.

The victim said she pushed Romolor. Her friend's wife, who was sleeping in the same room, got up and punched the suspect several times to get him off her.

Later, the victim asked her friend to drop her off at her house. She said she was scared and ashamed to report the incident to the police.

The victim identified Romolor in a Facebook photo shown her by a detective.

Romolor allegedly admitted kissing the woman.

Foundation distributes donations

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

The Lady Diann Torres Foundation handed out last Saturday afternoon the donated contents of a shipping container that came from the U.S. mainland in support of the Saipan community from the aftermath of Super Typhoon Yutu.

The donated items—from Guam, the U.S. mainland's Pacific Northwest area such as Oregon, Washington state, Idaho; and even Nevada, Arizona, and California—were distributed on Dec. 29, 2018, at the Dandan softball field.

"We are getting another container [on Dec. 30, 2018], and that container is coming directly from Las Vegas, Nevada," said foundation information officer Donovan Tudela in an interview last Saturday. "We are trying to give out as much as we can."

Saipan Tribune confirmed with Tudela yesterday that the foundation is holding another donation distribution at the San Antonio basketball court on Saturday, Jan. 5, 2019, 10am.

Foundation program coordinator Claudia Flores said Saturday that the contents of the containers included hygiene supplies, linens, entertainment items, canned goods, instant noodle packets, footwear, clothing, and even water.

"A lot of the items here are the basic necessities. However, some of the residents [stateside] were able to throw in some items such as little toys and whatnot to light up the holiday spirit of our children on the islands," Tudela said.

According to Tudela, the foundation spearheads the distribution of donations on Saipan and that Tinian has its own organizations that handle distributions.

CHamoru commission meetings and work session

The Kumisión i Fino' CHamoru yan i Fina'nå'guen i Historia yan i Lina'la' i Taotao Tåno'(Commission on CHamoru Language and the Teaching of the History and Culture of the Indigenous People) will hold its regular monthly meetings on Thursday, Jan. 10, from 12:30pm to 3pm at the Garden House in Hagåtña, and on Friday, Jan. 25, from 4:30pm to 6:30pm at a venue to be announced.

Work session will also be held on Thursday, Jan. 17, from 12:30pm to 3pm at the Garden House in Hagåtña to finalize plans for 3rd CHamoru Orthography Workshop and Training that will take place on on Jan. 25, from 8am to 4:30pm at a venue to be announced.

For more information, contact kumisión chair/Gé'helo' Hope Alvarez Cristobal at 483-0097 or secretary/Sikritåria Rosa Salas Palomo at 727-5522. ***(PR)***

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PAROLE

From Page 1

and Palau), and caregivers of CNMI residents.

In a message to *Saipan Tribune* over the weekend, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said he was updated by USCIS on the issue late Thursday evening. He is currently spending the holidays with his family in Boise, Idaho. "[USCIS] emphasized permanent legislation is needed that will give [those affected] the security."

"This announcement by USCIS regarding the termination of humanitarian parole for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens is unfortunate and underscores the need for a legislative fix by [the U.S.] Congress," he added in a separate statement.

Prior to USCIS' decision, Torres had written U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to emphasize the importance of the program not only for the CNMI economy but for the entire community.

"We understood that there would be difficulties dealing with saving this program, but we did our very best to advocate for people who have called these islands home and who have contributed tremendously to our progress," Torres said.

He added that USCIS officials talked to him last Friday to discuss the transitional policy while also adding that they would work with his administration and Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) for a legislative fix. "We stand ready to support our Delegate [Sablan] in making sure this [legislation] moves forward."

In a separate statement, Sablan said those affected by the program's termination have 180 days to apply to stay in the CNMI during the transition. "It's not automatic. The extension must be applied for. And [USCIS director L. Francis Cissna] said, so far, they have received about 500 applicants. So, I encourage anyone who has parole now to move quickly to get an extension."

Cissna, in a letter to Sablan, cited Executive Order 13767—Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements—that was signed last year by President Donald J. Trump as the reason for the USCIS decision. "Pursuant to this EO, I have conducted a review of USCIS categorical parole programs. As part of that review, I considered the CNMI categorical parole programs, and determined that these programs represent a broader implementation of the parole statue than is appropriate."

EO 13767 was issued on Jan. 25, 2017, where it instructs the DHS to "take appropriate action to ensure that parole authority… is exercised only on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the plain language of the statute, and in all circumstances only when an individual demonstrates urgent humanitarian reasons or a significant public benefit derived from such parole."

USCIS spokesman Michael Bars, in an email to the *Saipan Tribune*, added that they and DHS based their decision on EO 13767. "As part of USCIS mission of properly administering our nation's lawful immigration system, USCIS has discontinued the ability of individuals to receive parole under the CNMI program guidelines."

"Instead, [U.S.] Congress should work to address the immigration status of this population. Importantly, affected individuals will be given a transitional parole period to seek any other immigration status or relief for which they may be eligible. USCIS will continue to consider individual applications for parole fairly and efficiently on a case-by-case basis in accordance with all applicable laws, policies, and regulations," added Bars.

FBI

From Page 2

Department of Corrections. Manglona stated any access between Makarenko and his family would be up to U.S. Marshal and DOC policies.

After the hearing, Makarenko was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshal to be transferred to Florida.

According to the indictment, the export of defense-related articles was regulated by the Arms Export Control Act. The Act authorized the U.S. president to control the import and export of defense articles.

The Act provided that any person engaged in the business of exporting any defense articles shall register with the U.S. Department of State.

The International Traffic in Arms Regulations contains a list of defense articles and defense services that are subject to control. The list is called the U.S. Munitions List.

According to the indictment, no defense articles or defense services may be exported or otherwise transferred from the U.S. to a foreign country without a license or written approval from the U.S. Department of State, Directorate of Defense Trade Controls. The ITAR also prohibits attempted exports, re-exports, transfers, trade-shipments, and diversion from foreign countries of previously exported defense articles or services without State Department authorization.

The indictment said generation 4 ATN MARS night-vision rifle scopes, ATN Odin 61BW IX (30 Hz) thermal multi-purpose monoculars (ODIN 61BW thermal multi-purpose monocular), and Sellier & Bellot firearm ammunition primers are defense articles covered by the USML.

Makarenko is being accused of attempting to export military-grade night vision and thermal vision devices, and ammunition primers to Russia.

Makarenko's co-defendant, Vladimir Nevidomy, had already pleaded guilty in Florida and was sentenced to 26 months in prison last June.

According to the indictment, Nevidomy was a resident of Hallandale Beach, Florida, who was the owner, registered agent and principal of Primex Group Inc., a Florida corporation located in Sunny Isles Beach in Florida.

Makarenko, also known as Dmitryi, was a Russian national who resided in Vladivostok, Russia.

Beginning April 2013 and continuing through in or around November 2013, in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, in the Southern District of Florida, and elsewhere, the defendants, conspired to export defense articles from the U.S. to Russia, without having first obtained a license or written approval from the State Department DDTC.

It was the purpose of the conspiracy for the defendants to unjustly enrich themselves by exporting defense articles from the U.S. to Russia and to evade the prohibitions and licensing requirements of the AECA and ITAR and detection by the U.S. government.

The co-conspirators would use email to communicate between Russia and the United States.

Makarenko would place an order for defense articles including night-vision rifle scopes, monoculars, and ammunition primers from Nevidomy.

Nevidomy would procure the defense articles from U.S. vendors and receive the defense articles in Broward County, Florida.

Nevidomy would then allegedly ship the defense articles from the U.S. to Makarenko in Russia without obtaining the required licenses from the State Department's DDTC.

On April 12, 2013, Makarenko sent an email to Nevidomy requesting the purchase of two 4TN MARS 4X4 night-vision rifle scopes and explaining that a U.S. vendor had refused to sell the scopes to Makarenko because they are "restricted from shipping to" Makarenko's location in Russia.

On April 16, 2013, Nevidomy sent an email to Makarenko quoting the price and shipping cost at $11,755 for the export of 2 ATN MARS 4X4 night-vision rifle scopes.

On that same day, Makarenko wire transferred from a bank account in Shanghai, China, to the bank account of Nevidomy's company, Primex Group Inc. in the U.S., $11,755 for the purchase and shipping of the night-vision rifle scopes.

Nevidomy then paid a U.S. vendor in Texas $9,599 for the two night-vision rifle scopes.

In June 2013, Nevidomy exported two night-vision rifle scopes from the U.S. to Makarenko in Russia.

On April 17, 2013, Makarenko sent an email to Nevidomy requesting the purchase of thermal multi-purpose monocular.

On April 29, 2013, Nevidomy sent an email message to a U.S. vendor in Antioch, California, requesting the purchase of one ODIN 61BW thermal multi-purpose monocular.

On May 2, 2013, Nevidomy wire transferred $10,000 from the bank account of Primex Group Inc. in the U.S. to the bank account of the California vendor for the purchase of one ODIN 61BW thermal multi-purpose monocular.

On June 12, 2013, Nevidomy sent an email message to Makarenko explaining that the ODIN 61BW thermal multi-purpose monocular would be delivered within the week but because a private Russian courier office was being audited the courier office recommended "not to ship the night vision scopes at this time, in order to avoid problems."

In August 2013, Nevidomy exported the ODIN 61BW thermal multi-purpose monocular from the U.S. to Makarenko in Russia.

On June 3, 2013, Nevidomy sent an email message to a U.S. vendor in Arkansas requesting a quote for the purchase of a MARS 4x4 night-vision rifle scope.

On June 3, 2013, Makarenko sent an email to Nevidomy stating that he did not need the mounting for the night-vision scope.

On June 4, 2013, Nevidomy wire transferred $2,500 from the bank account of Primex Group Inc. in the U.S. to the bank account of the vendor in Arkansas, part of which was for the purchase of the MARS 4x4 night-vision rifle scope.

On June 5, 2013, Makarenko wire transferred $18,036 from a bank account in Riga, Latvia, to the bank account of Nevidomy's company, Primex Group Inc., in Florida, part of which was for the purchase of the MARS 4x4 night-vision rifle scope.

In July 2013, Nevidomy exported a MARS 4x4 night vision-rifle scope to Russia.

On July 19, 2013, Makarenko sent an email to Nevidomy requesting the purchase of 1,000 large rifle ammunition primers to be placed in a container in Miami, Florida, for shipment to Vladivostok, Russia.

On Aug. 30, 2013, Makarenko forwarded an email message to Nevidomy describing the ammunition primers being requested.

On Sept. 1, 2013, Nevidomy ordered 1,000 ammunition primers from the Arkansas vendor.

On Oct. 2, 2013, Nevidomy attempted to ship a parcel from Hallandale Beach, Florida, to Makarenko in Vladivostok, Russia, containing 1,000 Sellier & Bellot firearm ammunition primers.

On Nov. 20, 2013, after Makarenko received a letter from U.S. Customs and Border Protection indicating that the primers had been seized for attempted illegal export without a license, Makarenko sent an email message to Nevidomy asking, "What are we going to do?"

BABIES

From Page 1

and her first three children are boys, while the rest of her children are all girls.

"I am looking forward to seeing them grow up. …I am looking forward to teaching them," Vincent Pangelinan said.

"I am looking forward to seeing them learn new things," Rose Pangelinan said.

"As a parent, we all want our children to learn good things and for them to grow up learning the ways of God and showing them love so they can share it with their siblings," Vincent Pangelinan added.

Alei'a, whose second name has yet to be confirmed as of publication, was delivered third in the line of four New Year babies but, her parents were the only ones who consented to have some of their information printed in the media, which is also a requirement of the MARPAC Consumer Department for their annual New Year baby gifts.

This 2019, the company gave the Pangelinans several baby products such as baby wipes, sanitary napkins, air freshener, newborn baby formula, diapers, tissue and other items.

"We are very thankful for the supplies," said Rose Pangelinan, who was nearly speechless with gratitude.

"All of these is going to be useful for this little girl," she noted, adding that the couple is considering using Kate as their daughter's second name, as suggested by Vincent Pangelinan.

40 YEARS

From Page 1

comments from the Department of Public Lands, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Marianas Visitors Authority, but their officials have yet to respond as of press time.

Under the old law, public land leases were only allowed up to 25 years, plus an extension of 15 years, for a total of 40 years.

Hocog, however, urged the Legislature to clarify certain provisions of the new law. "Although I have approved this proposed legislation, I must gravely urge the Legislature to make critical amendments to its existing law in accordance with the [CNMI] Attorney General's recommendations regarding the bill's constitutionality concerns, specifically the separation of powers doctrine," Hocog wrote Senate President Arnold I. Palacios and House Speaker Rafael S. Demapan (R-Saipan).

The Legislature is granted authority to approve public land leases, a power it previously had when the Marianas Public Land Corp. was still in existence. The CNMI Supreme Court, after MPLC's dissolution more than 20 years ago, found that Article XI Section V of the CNMI Constitution is no longer valid after the executive branch took over MPLC's functions.

"Thus, the Legislature's permitting of the required legislative approval of public land leases under this legislation [P.L. 20-84] would violate the separation of powers doctrine of the CNMI and the U.S. Constitution," Hocog said.

Hocog then asked the Legislature to further study P.L. 20-84 and make the necessary amendments so the law would be in accordance with the CNMI Constitution.

"Accordingly, whereas I agree with the intent of the this [P.L. 20-84] and support the Legislature's objective of utilizing new and innovative ideas to attract new economic development and investors, I appeal to this body [Legislature] to revisit this matter and regrant DPL the approval authority of public land leases in order to adhere to the constitutionality implications of the passage of this legislation as was raised by the [CNMI AG]."

$100K bail for two in alleged drug trafficking

By KIMBERLY A BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The Superior Court imposed a bail of $100,000 on two men who were allegedly involved in the trafficking of an illegal substance.

Ronnie San Nicolas, 24, and Daniel Buniag, 29, were arrested for allegedly trafficking in crystal methamphetamine or "ice."

The preliminary hearing scheduled for yesterday, Jan. 2, was waived. Jean Pierre Nougis is representing San Nicolas and Joseph Horey is representing Buniag.

The two will be arraigned on Jan. 7, 2019.

According to a declaration of probable cause by drug enforcement task force officer Maynard D Reyes, Buniag allegedly allowed the use of his postal box in order to bring in the drug that allegedly belonged to San Nicolas.

A U.S. Postal Service package addressed to Buniag that he said contained items for his daughter was intercepted during routine customs inspection on Dec 20, 2018, at about 9:30am and a customs officer allegedly found it contained the illegal drug.

According to the declaration, Customs officers found a Folgers coffee container in the package and noticed that the seal of the container had been tampered with.

When Buniag was asked about the container, he said that someone else owned the package and he did not know what it contained.

Customs officers then unsealed the container and poured the contents into a trash bag, uncovering two separate packages inside the container.

After inspecting the contents of the package, customs officers found a crystalline substance that later tested presumptive positive for the presence of methamphetamine.

Buniag was then detained and questioned.

Buniag told officers that about a month prior, an acquaintance asked to use his mailbox and for him to receive mail on behalf of San Nicolas. Buniag agreed on a condition that he gets paid.

Buniag said that approximately two weeks after, he contacted San Nicolas and told him not to use his mailbox because he was worried that it was for illegal purposes. San Nicolas allegedly told Buniag it was too late because the package had already been sent.

Buniag showed officers his text messages with San Nicolas about the package deal.

RELATED NEWS See PHOTOS on Page 9

The #MarianasStrong Yearend fete draws large family crowd

The #MarianasStrong Yearend Celebration and Yutu 5K Holiday Fun Run to the Marianas, which coincided with the annual Mochitsuki Festival at the Paseo de Marianas in Garapan, drew a large crowd, most of them families.

The event started with the Yutu 5K Fun Run at 5pm at the pedestrian mall flagpole along Beach Road. Ninety-seven people, including those in costumes, ran south on Beach Road to the Cabrera Center and back.

Special prizes were awarded to three winners in the best holiday costume—runners in a Spiderman suit, a reindeer, and a Christmas tree.

All participants got Christmas hats and limited edition Yutu Fun Run shirts.

The Mochitsuki Festival followed at the Paseo de Marianas, featuring the traditional Japanese pounding of rice in preparation for the new year. People were then treated to non-stop entertainment by different performers onstage until 10pm.

The mochi-tasting had the longest line. Activities included food and drinks sales, games, a free bounce house for children, yoyo play, free Saipan-da bag per child, and free Saipan-da pencil per child. There was also raffle drawing for a Samsung Note 9.

MVA managing director Christopher Concepcion said the large turnout is making them think of making the fun run—the first time they had one—an annual Christmas event.

He said he saw a fun run in California so he talked with his team to do similar event here, considering that they had to cancel the first three Saturdays of the annual Christmas in the Marianas due to Super Typhoon Yutu's devastation.

"This is something we can consider next year because of the success. Bigger and better," he said.

MVA projects coordinator Jack Aranda said the turnout looks really good and all the money raised at the event goes to Karidat for recovery efforts.

Aranda said that three vendors participated in the year-end celebration: Inas' Kitchen, Kinpachi, and Furusato. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

MVA

Polynesian dance troupe Alana'la performs at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan.

TYPHOON DEBRIS CLEANUP

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

Capstone Pacificas, a company based in Branford, Florida, has been hired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency primarily to rid the CNMI of accumulated typhoon debris by incinerating it. The company is on a mission to hire CNMI residents for this and is willing to pay as much as $9 per hour with bonuses. All in all, it would be a $15-per-hour job. Capstone Pacificas' Ray Land, right photo, tells interested applicants about their project during a job fair last Sunday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

16 of 21 rescued from burning ship near Hawaii

HONOLULU (AP)—Good Samaritans on nearby merchant vessels rescued 16 members of the crew of a Panamanian car carrier heading from Japan to Hawaii that caught fire in the Pacific Ocean, the U.S. Coast Guard said.

Three of the remaining five crew members of the *Sincerity Ace* were found, but they are still in the water because they are unresponsive, the Coast Guard said Sunday. The other two crew members haven't been found, the agency said.

The *Serenity Ace* caught fire early Monday morning 1,800 nautical miles (3,333 kilometers) northwest of Hawaii. The Coast Guard has not said what caused the fire on the 650-foot (198-meter) ship.

The *Sincerity Ace* is adrift on the high seas, the Coast Guard said. Commercial tugs have been dispatched by the company to salvage the ship, the agency said.

"We are thankful for the assistance the crews of these merchant vessels have given us during this event significantly reducing possible response time," said Lt. Duane Zitta of the Coast Guard Joint Rescue Coordination Center Honolulu. "Their quick actions provided for the rescue of 16 members of the crew who would otherwise still be in the water and are continuing to aid us."

The U.S. Navy is helping with search efforts.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-19-002

LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE FOR CUC ROTA ADMINISTRATION & OPERATION

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from individuals or firms for the lease of office space for CUC Administration and Operation, Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must conform to American Disabilities Act (ADA), OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The RFP package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section (Saipan, Tinian or Rota), by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $20.00 for one RFP package set. The RFP package will be provided in a CD or emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. Prospective Proposers for this RFP must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division to be considered.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-RFP-19-002, Lease of Office Space for CUC Rota Administration & Operation" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 7, 2019.** Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.
All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services.

Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This RFP and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 21, 2018** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Christie Sablan, Senior Purchasing Assistant via email address christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

GARY CAMACHO
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

High court answers certified question about public lands

The Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Teregeyo v. San Nicolas* on Dec. 31, 2018, responding to two certified questions submitted for review by Department of Public Lands Secretary Marianne C. Teregeyo and Tinian Mayor Joey P. San Nicolas.

The first certified question asked the Supreme Court to review whether the Free Trade Zones Act permitting mayors to administer public lands designated as free trade zones violates Article 11, Section 4 of the NMI Constitution.

Section 4 mandates that the Marianas Public Land Corp. shall dissolve after 12 years and its functions transferred to the executive branch of government.

Article 11, Section 3 sets out the functions of the corporation: the management and disposition of public lands.

The high court found the language in Article 11 required the management and disposition of public lands be within the central government's control, for the benefit of the entire Commonwealth. Because mayors represent and are responsible to the local municipality rather than the entire Commonwealth, they fall outside the central government. Thus, the high court ruled that the CNMI Legislature could not take the administration of public lands away from the central government's executive branch, and give this responsibility to a separate official without any central executive oversight.

"When…the Free Trade Zone Act vested ultimate authority of the management and disposition of public lands with the Office of the Mayor, it violated Article XI of the NMI Constitution," the high court said in its response to the certified question.

The second certified question asked whether mayors may collect and expend revenues from public lands designated as free trade zones without violating the NMI Constitution. The high court declined to reach the merits of the second question because the Office of the Mayor later conceded that the law did not authorize mayors to keep funds generated from the administration of public lands.

The Supreme Court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme18.html. ***(PR)***

CUC eyes restoration of 24-hour water

By BEA CABRERA
beacabreasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Part of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s rebuilding efforts is to go back to the goal of providing 24-hour water supply throughout Saipan—a project that was strongly in progress until Super Typhoon Yutu hit in late October.

CUC executive director Gary Camacho said that 24-hour water has been a big a challenge for CUC for many years.

"We were able to achieve it for the first time in September, but the storm has impacted that. So the plan is to get us back to 24-hour water throughout the island soon enough as that is the focus and I think we will be able to achieve that without a problem."

"That is a priority, along with geothermal, as we will be looking into that again. We are proceeding with understanding our geothermal prospects even more," he added.

Camacho reiterated that water mitigation is extremely high on CUC's priority list. "In fact, it's on the top of the list. ...What this means is that the water supply will be available in multiple places and locations and will be self-generating and not dependent on the overhead system. With this, water should be distributed to many areas that still don't have power," he said.

He said the water restoration program to distribute water across the island is in conjunction with the plan of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to place generators in pumping stations.

"We do have a grant and a request for proposal is underway. …We want to make sure that we get this thing moving," he added.

Power expansion is also in the works. "We are going to be expanding, with more guy wires, storm guys and a variety of things to secure the poles and system for future storms. Concrete poles are in place but now, we need to anchor them," he said.

CUC was in the final phases of putting up concrete poles in the wake of Typhoon Soudelor "but then Yutu hit. …A lot of this will be dealt with and our system is much stronger as we move forward…"

Jan. 15 is last day to apply for DUA

This is to remind everyone that the last day to apply for Disaster Unemployment Assistance is Jan. 15, 2019.

DUA is available for individuals who have lost their jobs, had their regular work hours reduced, or were self-employed individuals but are no longer able to work as a direct result of Typhoon Mangkhut.

Individuals may apply for DUA if they have had a week(s) of unemployment after Sept. 11, 2018, which is the date that Typhoon Mangkhut occurred.

Individuals may also apply for DUA if they have had a week(s) of unemployment after Oct. 24, 2018, which is the date when the Super Typhoon Yutu disaster began.

How to apply

Claimants may apply for DUA either in person, by mail, or by phone. DUA applications and other forms may be obtained at either of the following location(s): Saipan: Springs Plaza, first floor Unit 5, Gualo Rai; Rota: Mayor's Office, Tatachog; Tinian: Edu's Plaza, first floor, San Jose.

Phone applications can be made by calling any of the following numbers Monday through Friday between 8am and 4pm: Saipan: (670) 788-4180; 788-4768 or 788-4769; Rota: (670) 532-9479; Tinian: (670) 783-2005 or 670-287-0411

Individuals who willfully conceal material facts or knowingly lies to obtain DUA to which they are not entitled will be required to repay all benefits fraudulently collected and may be prosecuted.

Visit the CNMI Department of Labor website at www.marianaslabor.net for more DUA-related information. ***(PR)***

TORRES, BOISE STATE SCHOLARS MEET WITH OTTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, first lady Diann T. Torres, their family, and members of the CNMI Million Dollar Scholars from Boise State University meet with Gov. C. L. "Butch" Otter in Boise to discuss ways of strengthening the relationship and friendship between Boise, Idaho and the CNMI.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Public warned of high surf, rip currents

A high surf advisory is in effect until 7am Friday.

Also, a small craft advisory is in effect until 6pm Tuesday next week due to a high risk of rip currents through Tuesday afternoon.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, large swells will continue to produce hazardous surf and dangerous rip currents on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Along north facing reefs, expect hazardous surf of 8 to 10 feet to slowly subside to between 7 and 9 feet today. Surf will continue to subside further, possibly falling below hazardous levels tonight. There is still a high risk of rip currents.

Along east facing reefs, surf is expected to remain below the hazardous level of 12 feet but surf of up to 10 feet will produce a high risk of rip currents for several more days.

Northeast winds of 15 to 25 knots and combined seas of 9 to 11 feet will produce hazardous conditions for operators of small craft through the beginning of next week. The public and inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid sailing in these conditions.

The public is advised to avoid venturing near reefs and beaches, especially those facing east or north. Large breaking waves can knock you down and cause serious injuries. Strong rip currents will be life-threatening.

If you become caught in a rip current, yell for help. Remain calm. Do not exhaust yourself and stay afloat while waiting for help. If you have to swim out of a rip current, swim parallel to shore and back toward the beach when possible. Do not attempt to swim directly against a rip current as you will tire quickly. ***(PR)***

Guam Guard soldiers to mobilize today

A mobilization ceremony will be held today, Jan. 3, beginning at 2:30pm, at the Guard's Readiness Center, in Barrigada, to transition soldiers to active duty status.

In August 2018, the Guam National Guard received a Department of the Army activation order to provide security forces to Task Force Talon on Andersen Air Force Base, Yigo, Guam.

Task Force Talon is responsible for operating the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense in Guam. The THAAD is an anti-ballistic missile defense system designed to shoot down short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles in their terminal phase (descent or reentry) by intercepting with a hit-to-kill approach.

While these Guam Guard soldiers, or Task Force Guahan, will not be leaving the island, they will be transitioned and assigned to Task Force Talon leadership during this one-year mission in Guam. This active-duty status will result in a positive economic impact for their families and the island.

As always, the Guard asks the public for their continued support as this mobilization will also have a significant impact on the Guam National Guard.

"We want to thank the people of Guam, especially the employers, for their continued support of our members and their families," said Maj. Gen. Roderick R. Leon Guerrero, The Adjutant General of the Guam National Guard. "We still have airmen who are currently deployed or will be departing for deployments in the coming weeks. Please keep all our members in your thoughts and prayers now and for the duration of their missions.".

Due to recent suspension of Trusted Traveler Program, no one will be allowed into Readiness Center unless they are on a preapproved list. ***(PR)***

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FSM govt donates $100,000 to Yutu relief efforts

Acting governor Victor B. Hocog receives a $100,000 donation on behalf of the CNMI on Friday from the Federated States of Micronesia Honorary Consul to the CNMI Diego T. Benavente and leaders from the various FSM states. Joining them are Rep. Ivan A. Blanco, CNMI Chuukese Association president Own Cholymay, and Finance Secretary Larrisa Larson.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In a presentation ceremony on Capital Hill last Friday, former lieutenant governor Diego T. Benavente, the honorary consul of the Federated States of Micronesia in the CNMI, presented acting governor Victor B. Hocog with a $100,000 donation from FSM to assist in recovery efforts relating to the damage the Commonwealth sustained from Super Typhoon Yutu.

Also in attendance were presidents of the different associations for each of the FSM states, Rep. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan), who is also chairman of Yutu relief efforts for FSM citizens, and Finance Secretary Larissa Larson.

According to Benavente, this donation is in addition to an earlier appropriation FSM President Peter Christian and the country's congressional leaders made in the same amount to support the relief efforts for Typhoon Mangkhut, which hit the CNMI in September.

"I am pleased to accept this for our people here in the CNMI for further distribution to those severely affected by Yutu," said Hocog, who also expressed appreciation on behalf of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres for FSM's generosity. FSM also contributed manpower to expedite the restoration of utilities in villages.

For his part, Blanco said, "This is a very generous donation and a mindful one. With this being a season of thanksgiving, we cannot thank our leaders in the FSM enough for the help they have given us in the past, and most especially during this trying time."

Chuukese Association president Own Cholymay expressed the sentiments of his countrymen by saying that they feel blessed for all the support and assistance given to their citizens residing in the Northern Marianas.

Benavente said the FSM government also desires to provide construction workers and carpenters to assist in rebuilding homes damaged by the typhoon.

In a meeting Benavente had with Christian, he mentioned it was a "great idea because people do need construction professionals at this time." Christian also noted that local money was appropriated by the FSM to assist in travel expenses incurred for workers helping the CNMI's relief efforts.

After presenting the check to the Department of Finance, Hocog thanked FSM leaders and Benavente for seeing the effects Super Typhoon Yutu has had on their compatriots in the CNMI.

"We'd like to see more leaders coming this way to meet with our FSM citizens to establish more connections among the citizens and residents in the Commonwealth and build a stronger relationship as we continue to expand and grow a better livelihood for them," he added."

Hocog is optimistic that the cash contributions for both Yutu and Mangkhut recovery will be used to help affected FSM citizens. ***(PR)***

Members of the Samaritan's Purse International visit the Green Meadow School to share material and spiritual blessings with students and teachers.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Samaritan's Purse visits Green Meadow School

Members of the religious group Samaritan's Purse International visited the Green Meadow School twice to share material and spiritual blessings with students and teachers alike.

On their first visit, the missionaries introduced their group by sharing the biblical story about the Good Samaritan and mingled with the students from kindergarten to middle school. The Samaritan's Purse International gave away personal kits to each student.

Last Dec. 4, 2018, another group from Samaritan's Purse returned to GMS, this time to distribute Bibles and solar lights.

"You could see the glow in the students' eyes as each were receiving their own Bible," the school said in a statement. "As a Christian school, this was a great blessing for the students. On that day, during the afterschool care, most of the students, especially the primary and intermediate students, preferred to read their new Bibles over playing with other games. They were fascinated by the colorful pictures that came with the Bible."

GMS expressed thanks to Samaritan's Purse International for its generosity and empathy, not only for GMS but for all other schools on the island. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Yearend Celebration

Participants in the Yutu 5K Holiday Fun Run on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan take to the start line before the race, which kicked off the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, marking the resiliency and recovery of the community following Super Typhoon Yutu. MVA

Marianas Visitors Authority chief accountant Joanne Paraiso, left, and accountant Jadel Ignacio give out Saipan-da backpacks and sell fundraising T-shirts at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. Proceeds of the event will be given to Karidat Social Services and other organizations providing relief assistance following Super Typhoon Yutu. MVA

Marianas Ukelele spread holiday cheer at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Young holiday revelers cheer finishers in the Yutu 5K Holiday Fun Run on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Brass ensemble Su-san Band warm up at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Saipan Music & Dance Studio performs at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Rep. Edmund Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) pounds mochi at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan, Saipan. The celebration included the Mochitsuki Festival, the Japanese traditional pounding of glutenous rice to mark the new year. MVA

Members of the audience join the final number of the Saipan Awaodori dance troupe during the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. The celebration included the Moichitsuki Festival, an annual Japanese celebration marking the new year. MVA

Children enjoy a free bounce house at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. The event was organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority, PDM Promoters, Japanese Society of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Japan Northern Marianas Descent Association. MVA

Festivalgoers sample free mochi, a traditional Japanese food prepared at new year, at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Children receive free Saipan-da backpacks at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Festival-goers purchase Japanese dishes from Furusato Restaurant at the #MarianasSTRONG Year-end Celebration, on Dec. 29, 2018, in Garapan. MVA

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXIX, Issue No. 1

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
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EDITORIAL

Rising maternal deaths in US deserve greater scrutiny

The United States should not have the highest rate of maternal deaths in the developed world.

Yet that is the reality women in America now face. Here, the rate of mothers who die from pregnancy-related complications has risen since 2000, even as the rate in other countries has declined.

Recent reporting by NPR and ProPublica has highlighted the extent of the problem, including how a focus on infants' health can cause providers to overlook what's afflicting their mothers.

Responding to this escalating women's-health crisis should be a top priority for government officials. To that end, Congress recently did the right thing by passing a bill that aims to get to the root of why U.S. mothers are dying from pregnancy-related causes an estimated 700 to 900 times per year. The president signed the bill Friday.

The Preventing Maternal Deaths Act is a first step, but an important one. Sponsored by Republican U.S. Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler of Battle Ground, the bill provides $12 million per year to support state maternal mortality review committees, which can investigate and gather data on every maternal death that occurs.

This kind of data-gathering matters because most maternal deaths are preventable, health experts say. Investigating what went wrong in each case can inform best practices at hospitals across the country, helping to keep more women alive.

"Currently the available data is woefully inadequate, which hinders our ability to find out why moms are dying," Herrera Beutler said during a speech on the House floor. She said better data could also help diagnose why black women and women in rural areas die from pregnancy-rated causes at much higher rates.

Addressing this problem would mean many more women getting to see their children grow up. Thousands more children would grow up knowing their mothers.

The president and members of Congress deserve criticism for their inability to tackle many important issues, such as keeping the government open.

But at least by enacting this law in 2018, they have come together to give U.S. mothers a better chance of survival.

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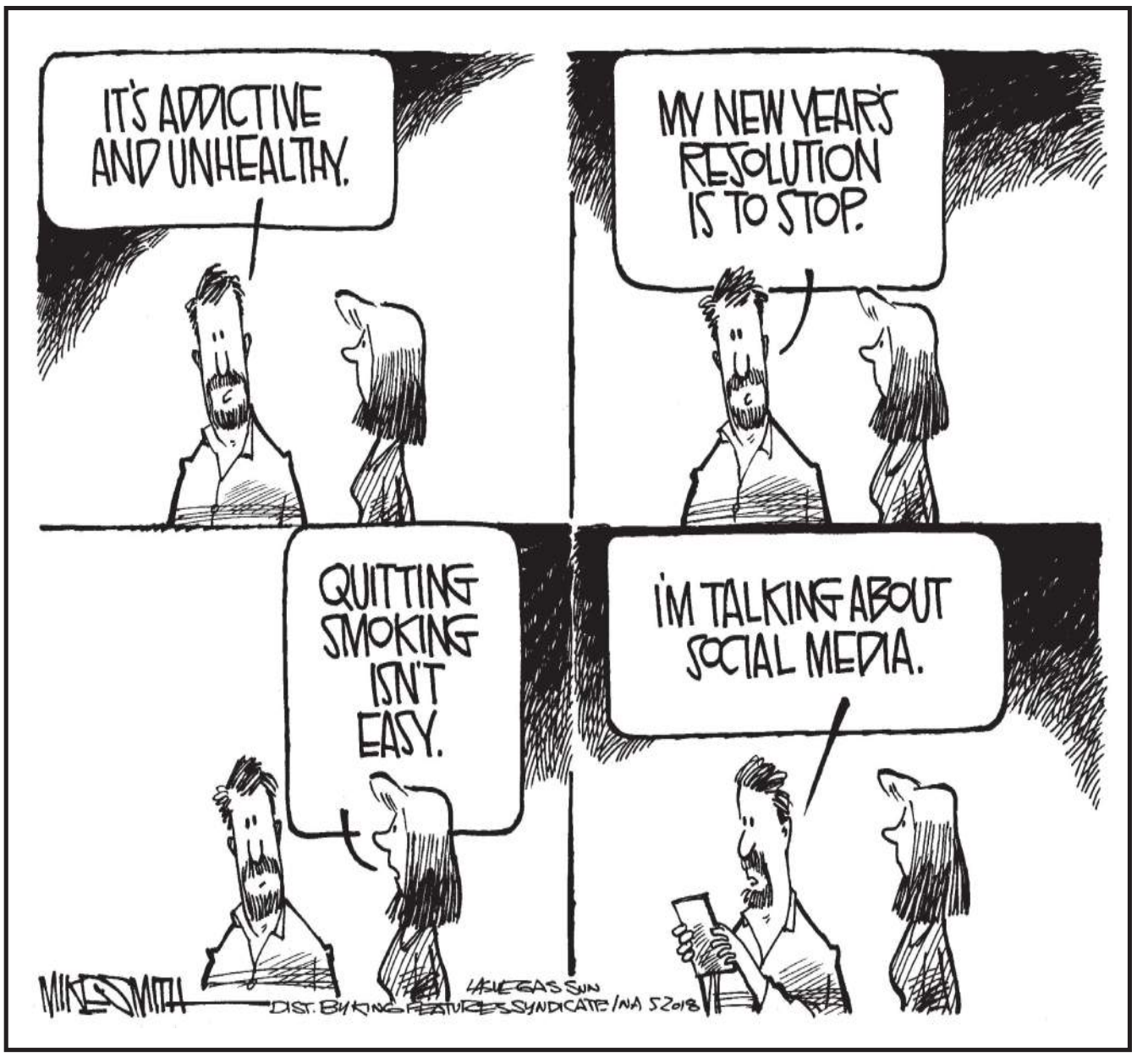
IT'S ADDICTIVE AND UNHEALTHY.
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The pause between no-longer and not-yet

By GINA BARRECA
The Hartford Courant

Gina Barreca is a board of trustees distinguished professor of English literature at University of Connecticut and the author of 10 books. She can be reached at www.ginabarreca.com.

"It's very important to be one's age," poet W. H. Auden reminds us. "You get ideas you have to turn down – 'I'm sorry, no longer'; 'I'm sorry, not yet.'"

2019 is our age.

As we head into New Year's Eve, which more than any other holiday asks us to distinguish between the no-longers and not-yets in our own lives, we should take advantage of the pause and consider what's gone and what's ahead.

Commentators more informed than I will provide lists, timetables and catalogs of the historical, political and social events that shaped 2018. They'll give us a receipt for what we've packed into this sack of a year, ringing us out like the cashier at the grocery store as we ring in 2019.

Pundits will be discussing, I'm sure, that to which we collectively seem to be saying no longer. 2018 was, after all, a year when a lot of folks said "Enough" or "Time's Up" or "Me Too" and the folks they said it about got caught, got time, didn't get their $120 million exit packages from CBS, or got appointed to the Supreme Court anyhow.

It was a year when the most gentle, patient and open-mined of us were no longer able to discuss anything without wanting to slap somebody. Tongue-biting became a medically recognized condition, one that could be treated only by restricting the daily intake of electronic media.

2018 became the year when strangers could no longer discuss a topic even as bland as the weather without raising their blood pressure because 1) If you believe in climate change, it now implies that you don't believe in an omnipotent supreme being who, having created the earth, therefore regulates its temperature at will with a cosmic version of a pop-up poultry timer; 2) If you don't believe in climate change, it implies you're an anti-science dolt who listens to nothing but Charlie Daniels' fiddle as the world burns.

But I'm trying to think more locally this New Year's Eve.

I'm picturing Auden's no-longers and not-yets as the two fixed points holding up the hammock of right-now. Or maybe they're like the two top points of a sling-shot, and right-now is at the center.

Too outdoorsy?

How about this? 2019 is a local—and so is every other year. Years are addresses where we once lived but to which can no longer return as residents. There's no real harm in revisiting as long as you remember you're only passing through. If you're going back to remind yourself of what it was like, it can be fun. If you return to measure the differences, for better or worse, from whom you were when you lived there and who and where you are now, it can be interesting.

But it's best to keep your windows rolled up and not pause for too long, because you don't want to get stuck. If you sit in idle in front of your ex's, or your high school theater, or your grandma's house, or your college's football field, or wherever you had your worst or best moments, you can end up stuck. And you don't want to be one of those poor souls who needs to get towed away. You don't want to stay in one old cul-du-sac for so long that they'll send in heavy equipment or a flatbed.

But we all could do a memoir with addresses for each year. For example, when I was 16, I lived at 1973 Boulevard of Broken Dreams. We've recently been living on 2018 Privileged Drive in Political Chaos, but we spent the past weekend with friends from the old neighborhood, 1987 Barely Makes Rent and 1978 Not A Clue.

Even if we picture the year ahead as terrain, however, we still can't set a GPS for 2019. Maps and guidebooks can give us general directions, but here's all we really know: No-longer is in the rear-view mirror, and not-yet is somewhere down the road.

Right now, we are facing this moment, this day, this night. Let's welcome the new year, cross the fresh threshold, turn up the music and make ourselves at home.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Kuestion 15-Mit

Mauleg ta faisen i manma-elihe haf` masusede na 15-mit na empleau rumisisibe suetdun popble (poverty income)?

Seguru-yu` na `in tiñgu` haf` tinateña i asuntu `nai maliñgu Marianas $7 biyon pesus. Dañosu i malaheñiu ni `in fatta kontra man-mauleg siha na inbetsionistas (investors) ginen Japon. Kulan mohon mansiña hit giya hita namaisa.

Na ti mañaina-ta mismu umakonseha hit na tat banidosu ti tumatki fonyidosña? I maliñgun $7 biyon pesus dañkulu na prestan diskuidu gi kahan iya Marianas! Esta `in sida`e tahgueña?

Manmalefa hamyu na siha tumutuhun i industrian bisita guine yan otru siha mandañkulu na bisnis? Ya malagresidu na heñiu ta fatta pot man-babaila hit pa`gu yan Chinu? Na ti magahet na i Chinu tai fiñkas?

Japon i fuetsudu gi bandan rikesa ke haye na nasion gi oriya! Hu tuñgu` haf` masusede lau hamyu fan `in esplika puede suette ya `inna` halum tatte i guaka gi pastahe.

Dimas, na ti alacha `nai `in annunsia adelantun ekonomia? Na ti este na adelantu debi u katsu kontodu hatsadan suetdu? Guaha inna` sahñge para este na nesessidat pat `in saulag bisiun "ke sera"?

`In fatta i problema ni hamyu tumutuhun pot diskuidu. Haf` na `infa` hamyu lokue` manma-isague lau diskuidun miyu?

Uma`atotpe te`ug na probleman fondu yan hinanau man-mauleg na inbetsionistas Japon. U bira siha mohon tatte Marianas?

Estrañu: Mampus sahñge finapus 2018 na sakan piot `nai hinichum hinagoñgña as Yutu. Destrosiau i tanu`. Megai familia mantai fanliheñg pot destrosiu. Adumididi` sige mahatsa tatte gima` niha.

Gi hilu` sensian ina`ayuda yan hinimiddi siempre ta fana`lu tatte gi otdinariu na modun linala`ta. Makat yan sapet lau na`e animu sa` fafat-ta un` pasu estake u fonhayan checho`ta siha.

Lina`la`: Antes na linala` popble mas didog ke pa`gu. Taya` ayudu guihe na tiempu ayudu para `an tai che`chu` i tatan familia. Estague` i difirensia!

Fuetsau todu mañaunau gi inaligau mantension. Hu pokate este na katsada gi hiniben-hu. Sapet gi katkuet birada! `In padesi dinaña` yan mañeluhu gi lamasan sena `nai taya` para bai`n kanu`.

`In hale` tinanum mame sune gi tatten kusina ya `in setni para sena. Taiguenau chinatsagaña i tanu `antes!

Mansuette na biahe sa` guaha ayudun food stamps. Maseha ti konfotmeyu` nu este na programa lau pega papa` sa` mas-yu` kontentu `an guaha para i estomagun famaguon. Nahuñg na pinadesi gi tiempun mame!

Mauleg lokue` programan amotsan oga`an yan talo`ane gi eskuela siha. Ha sedi i estudiante gumai ganas man-estudia `nai guaha alimientu gi tatautauña. Diberas na tiru antes gi inaligau prebinsion familia.

Didog: Pinilog-hu na hame solu pumadesi didog na pinepble estake huli`e i kondision `nos kuantos familia gi bisinu. Diberas guaha `nai `nos kuantos dias masuñgun sin neñkanu`. Mattu gi ha estotbayu` ayu na kondision.

Magahet na ma-usune mandaña `nai todu mañgalamten gi inaligau mantension. Ha inklusu peskan tanu` yan tasi. Taduñg na kañadan sapet hu pokate mina hu komprende ti deskribiyun na linala` popble.

Ayu na karera gaige na sige disision ginen lagu kau para umafa` lugat militat i sankatan na Marianas pat sibit. Na chatsaga sa` dispues de ta payune manmalag i moseria manma-utut siha cho`chu` gi hiniyuñg i NTTU.

Humalum i Depattamentun Interior dispues. Sapet! I suetdu ennau i $.16 sientimus gi ora. Este siha na mattiru umafuetsas inaligau para ta gobietnan maisa. Mauleg dispues resuttaña este na pinetsige. Tagogosa pa`gu!

**Afnu`:** Gi hinalum afnu` todu boti gi puettu man-gama, libre. Pot un` ratu bira i asuntu guatu gi ekonomia. Sin afnu` siempre lamegai para u fan gaige gi fondun tasi pot taya` hanum para u fan gama. Guse`ña man-dama gi oriyan bapot siha.

Mauleg maprekura adelantun ekonomia kosake mas megai bisnis, cho`chu` yan kontribusion aduana (tax) para usun setbisiu. Gigon matulaika ya afnu` mas libre Marianas gi apas nesessidatña siha kontodu kualidat linala` familia.

Obligasion: Hu usune offisiun periodista pot 46 añus na tiempu. Hu agradese i appottunidat dumaña`e tautau-ta gi diniskuten asuntun linahyan siha.

Ti libianu na offisiu. Hu chahlau obligasion-hu gi hilu` manatma na kinimite gumuatdia interes publiku. Tat barañka na kañada tihu fatoigue. Preparau-yu`!

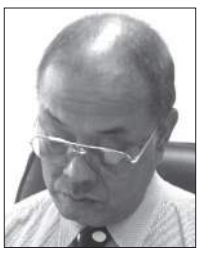
Hu komprende na i machanda patte gi offisiu mina` tiha estrañayu`. Hu agradese frañku na inana`en opiñion gi katkuet asuntu.

Tat botlu tihu chage gi karera. Lau potput kuerun lasas-hu para todu mala-intension. Ti asuntu! I publiku asuntog-hu!

Felis finaposhu guine na offisiu ya yangin mafaisenyu` kau bai repite, huñgan! Gi silensiu na patte gi konsensiag-hu hu agradese appottunidat gumuatdia interes linahyan!

Kulepbla: Casino un` asuntu ni kulan kulepbla ni dos iluña. `Un fuegu i unu lau gaige i otru para un` nina` dañu. Dios mihu. Manu gi disision publiku ti `in kemprende?

Ha atisa sensian suspechu kau guaha manma-apapase para u sige chumoneg dañosu na asuntu kontra kutturan natibu? Kase mauleg ta faisen kada unu haf` kinemprendeña disision ginen i tautau. Hafa mohon?



By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands. All views expressed by the author are his/her own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion and stance of the* Saipan Tribune.

My dream 2020 candidate—someone to heal America's wounds

As an alumnus of Newsweek and Time in their glory days, I sometimes can't resist thinking like a newsmagazine editor. Any news event—the government shutdown, the withdrawal from Syria, the Brexit mess—can be summarized by that all-purpose cover line, "NOW FOR THE HARD PART."

Similarly, the obvious cover for next Monday would be a race track starting gate with more than a dozen familiar Democrats ("There's Bernie, there's Beto, there's Biden, there's Booker ... ") leaning forward in their saddles as the cliche-ridden headline proclaims, "AND THEY'RE OFF."

A quarter century ago, Bill Clinton could wait until Oct. 3, 1991, to declare his 1992 candidacy and Mario Cuomo (the father of current New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo) could play Hamlet on the Hudson until he deliberately missed the late December filing deadline for the New Hampshire primary.

But such languor is now as outdated as, well, news magazines shaping the political discourse.

The Democratic National Committee has already scheduled the first primary debates for June and July 2019. And a front-loaded primary calendar (California and Texas will dominate a souped-up Super Tuesday on March 3, 2020) means that presidential contenders may need to raise as much as $200,000 a day all through 2019, which provides additional motivation for an early start.

Despite the premature fixation on early polls, it is impossible to game out the Democratic race this far in advance.

This applies to candidates as well as pundits. Mike Bloomberg, for example, has been telling anyone in earshot that he will only run if he thinks he can win. But what's the former New York mayor's tolerance for risk? Does he demand a 50-percent shot (unattainable no matter how much money he spends), a 15-percent chance (which seems overly optimistic) or a probably realistic 5-percent possibility?

Even what we think we know about primary politics has been upended by the Democratic Party's new rules. Take as an illustration the opening-gun Iowa caucuses, scheduled for Feb. 3, 2020.

In prior years, the problem with handicapping the Iowa caucuses has been predicting who would show up in person to vote on a cold mid-winter Monday night. The assumption has always been that—unlike a primary—Iowa measures the enthusiasm of activists.

But party rules will now allow for absentee balloting at the caucuses. Does that argue that the participation will be even greater than the 240,000 Iowa Democrats who powered insurgent Barack Obama to victory in 2008? Does that mean that the caucus electorate will not tilt as far left (Bernie Sanders almost beat Hillary Clinton in 2016) as in prior years?

The adage about the role of the caucuses in winnowing the Democratic field has always been, "There are three tickets out of Iowa." But this time around, there could be eight or even more tickets out of Iowa. The reason: Another little-noticed change in Democratic rules.

Until now, due to a quirk in caucus procedures, a Democratic candidate needed 15-percent support in any precinct to have his or her votes tallied at all. But in 2020, Iowa caucus votes will be counted just like they are in primaries. As a result, it is easy to envision a cluttered Iowa result with, say, a half-dozen candidates clustered around 8 percent.

When it comes to winning a presidential nomination, the devil is often in details like these. Had, for example, Hillary Clinton vigorously contested the 2008 caucuses scheduled after Iowa—in which Obama romped almost unopposed—a different Democratic president probably would have moved into the Oval Office in 2009.

The 2020 nomination fight will be the first Democratic contest since 1980 that will not be shaped by either Ronald Reagan or opposition to George W. Bush's Iraq War.

The political caution of the Clintons (who ran in 1992, 1996, 2008 and 2016) was a nervous response to witnessing three GOP presidential landslides in the 1980s. The Al Gore of 2000 (who played down his environmental passions) also fit into this centrist mold.

As for the Iraq War, it was responsible for the stunning 2003 rise of Howard Dean, America's first internet-powered candidate. (Dean's Icarus-like 2004 collapse was because of other factors). And in 2008, early opposition to Bush's war gave Obama his initial rationale to challenge the hawkish Hillary.

Donald Trump, of course, has made the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush seem almost as distant as William McKinley's "front-porch campaign" of 1896.

For some activists, the final break with the Clinton and Obama years means that 2020 candidates should be assessed for political purity. Any deviation on leftwing litmus-test issues like Medicare for all or a Green New Deal is a reason for scorn. Even more heretical is any history of accepting support from Wall Street Democrats or the oil and gas industry.

From my perspective, this rigidly ideological approach is misguided. What America, and not just the Democrats, need most of all in 2020 is a presidential candidate who can begin to heal the nation's deep wounds.

Part of the package would be an inspirational appeal to our better angels as citizens. But even more important would be that half-forgotten virtue called competence—the ability to understand how government works and to know how to use the levers of power to recover from the wreckage of the Trump years.

It used to said derisively about political incompetents, "He could screw up a one-car funeral." Trump made presidential history this week by screwing up a Christmas Eve photo-op, mocking a seven-year-old girl's belief in Santa Claus.

By this standard, any Democrat (and any rational Republican) would offer a dramatic improvement over Trump. But the trick will be to find the best man or woman to transcend the gutter-snipe politics and know-nothing governing style that has, tragically, become the 2018 norm.

By WALTER SHAPIRO
CQ-Roll Call

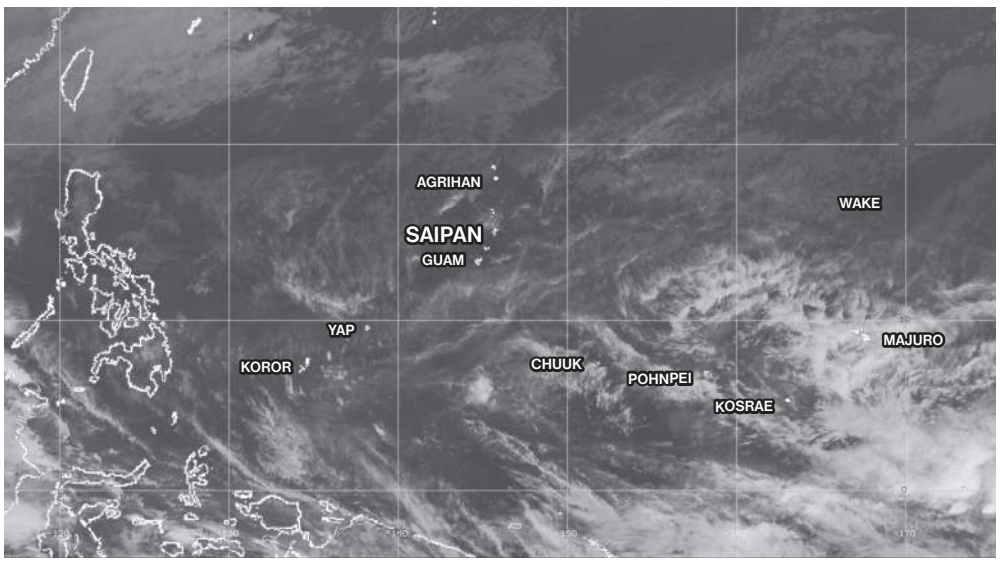
Roll Call columnist Walter Shapiro is a veteran of Politics Daily, USA Today, Time, Newsweek *and* The Washington Post.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	Breezy. Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.
88° 77°	88° 77°	88° 77°	88° 77°	88° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 10:01 AM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2019
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

The shear line that brought showers and increased cloudiness to the Marianas is now south of the Guam waters and the associated showers are no longer affecting the islands. A dry pattern is now in place across the region and will continue through the remainder of the week. A developing frontal system is evident on the latest ASCAT analysis well north of the Marianas. This system will push south with the latest model guidance showing the front becoming a shear line later in the week as it approaches the region. This system will bring another round of scattered showers to the islands over the weekend.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Windy	86° / 78°
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Yap	Showers	86° / 80°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Pohnpei	Showers	85° / 78°
Kosrae	Showers	85° / 78°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Windy	70° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	36° / 18°
Hong Kong	Cloudy	68° / 64°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	79° / 72°
London	Partly Cloudy	39° / 30°
Los Angeles	Sunny	67° / 45°
Manila	Sunny	84° / 73°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	104° / 61°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	80° / 73°
New York	Showers	44° / 41°
Osaka	Sunny	52° / 39°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	43° / 30°
Busan	Sunny	48° / 34°
Rome	Sunny	45° / 28°
Salem	Rain	62° / 55°
San Francisco	Sunny	54° / 43°
Seoul	Sunny	41° / 19°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	48° / 34°
Washington, DC	Showers	48° / 34°

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:00 AM	HIGH TIDE	0.14
6:59 AM	LOW TIDE	1.68
11:57 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.17
5:09 PM	LOW TIDE	1.93

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM
Saturday	6:44 AM	5:59 PM
Sunday	6:44 AM	6:00 PM
Monday	6:44 AM	6:01 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	4:02 AM	3:45 PM	-
Friday	4:55 AM	4:32 PM	-
Saturday	5:46 AM	5:20 PM	-
Sunday	6:37 AM	6:10 PM	-
Monday	7:25 AM	7:00 PM	-

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2018

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:15am	9:55am	Daily
UA105	4:45pm	5:25pm	2, 4

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:15am	6:30am	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily

TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED:

TW9308	1:10am	4:10am	3, 4
TW308	1:35am	5:20am	Daily
TW9308	3:20am	6:30am	2
TW9308	3:25am	6:30am	5
7C3403	4:35am	8:25am	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U86486	10:10am	8:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-HANGZHOU (HGH)

JD396	7:30am	11:00am	1
JD396	4:50pm	7:55pm	4

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:55am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:15am	9:40pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA117/183 via GUM	9:15am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA117/193 GUM-ROR	9:15am	11:50pm	2, 5 via
UA105/183	4:45pm	9:40pm	2 via GUM
UA105/183	4:45pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	1:50am	5:15am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UO43	5:45am	8:40am	1, 3, 5, 7
UA117/159	9:15am	11:00pm	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via GUM
UA105/159	4:45pm	11:00pm	2, 4 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	7:30am	8:11am	Daily
UA104	3:00pm	3:41pm	2, 4

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:35pm	2:00am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3452	10:05pm	2:00am+1	1

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED:

TW9307	6:30pm	12:10am+1	2, 3
TW307	7:00pm	12:35am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
TW307	7:05pm	12:35am+1	1
TW9307	9:00pm	2:20am+1	1
TW9307	9:05pm	:25am+1	4
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:20pm	4:50am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

HANGZHOU (HGH)-SAIPAN

JD395	8:05am	3:30pm	4
JD395	9:35pm	5:00am+1	7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:40pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA182/174	12:40am	8:11am+1	3, 6 via GUM
PR110/UA174	10:05pm	8:11am+1	Daily via GUM
UA192/174	10:30pm	8:11am+1	2, 5 via GUM-ROR
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:11am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:15pm	12:15am+1	3, 7
UO42	6:50pm	1:45am+1	7
UO42	9:30pm	4:25am+1	2, 4, 6
UA116/174	11:45pm	8:11am+1	2, 4 via GUM
UA116/174	11:55pm	8:11am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, PR PAL Express; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The* Saipan Tribune *is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

Business

Plunge in oil prices threatens Iraq's postwar recovery

BAGHDAD (AP)—The latest plunge in oil prices has dealt a heavy blow to Iraq's stagnating economy, threatening the new government's ability to rebuild after the war with the Islamic State group and provide basic services to areas roiled by recent protests.

Brent crude oil, used to price international purchases, briefly rose above $85 a barrel in October but has since plummeted to less than $55 — a nightmare for a country like Iraq that derives 95 percent of its revenue from oil exports.

A $111.9 billion draft budget sent to parliament in October projects crude exports of 3.8 million barrels per day to be sold at $56 per barrel. The bill, which includes a 23 percent increase in spending, would leave a deficit of $22.8 billion.

But that won't even begin to address the colossal challenge of reconstruction after years of war. Some 1.8 million people have yet to return to their homes, according to the United Nations. Mosul, the country's second largest city, lies partly in ruins, as do many other cities, towns and villages once held by IS militants.

Iraq's Planning Ministry estimates the country needs approximately $88 billion for reconstruction. In February, donors at a Kuwait summit pledged $30 billion in loans and investments to finance a portion of the bill, but little progress has been made to fulfill the pledges.

In Iraq's oil-rich south, meanwhile, which was spared from the war's devastation, protests have erupted in recent months over unemployment and poor public services. Rolling power outages have been a nationwide problem going back to the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, and in the south the tap water is undrinkable.

AP

In this Dec. 18, 2018 photo, an un-finished bank building stands at an idle construction site in Baghdad, Iraq.

"We were surprised by the plunging oil prices and we have fallen into a big problem," said lawmaker Haneen al-Qado, who chairs parliament's Economy Committee. "The government is not in an enviable position."

Iraqis elected a new government earlier in 2018, but it is dominated by the same bickering political factions that have governed the country for the last 15 years. Lawmakers have rejected the draft budget, calling for a new one that would estimate an even lower oil price and allocate even more funds for public investments.

Qado says they may not be able to approve a budget until sometime in the first quarter of next year. Until then, the government can only spend one-twelfth of the previous year's allocation each month.

While international attention has been focused on the devastation in northern and western Iraq, and the protests in the south, the budget crisis has also taken a heavy toll on Iraqis living in more stable areas. Construction projects across Baghdad have been stalled for years, with half-finished buildings turned into neighborhood garbage dumps.

Kadhim Nima Khudair's construction company signed contracts in 2014 to build four schools at a cost of $5 million. By the following year, three of them were 80 percent complete, but then public funds dried up as the government launched the costly war against IS. When oil prices started to recover in 2017, the government began paying installments again, but only for the projects that were mostly completed. Now the payments have stopped again pending the budget negotiations.

Prosecutors say fires may mean PG&E violated criminal sentence

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—A California utility's role in igniting wildfires last year could allow a judge to find that it violated terms of its criminal sentence in a 2010 gas pipeline explosion that killed eight people, federal prosecutors said Monday.

In a court filing, the U.S. attorney's office in San Francisco said state investigations blamed Pacific Gas & Electric power lines for some fires in October 2017. Investigators also found evidence that state law was violated.

"These facts, specifically if PG&E started a wildfire by reckless operation or maintenance of its power lines, may serve as a basis for the court to find that the defendant corporation violated" terms of its probation, prosecutors said.

A U.S. judge in 2017 put PG&E on five years of probation following its conviction on pipeline safety charges stemming from an explosion of one of its pipelines in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The filing by prosecutors came after a judge overseeing the pipeline case asked PG&E to explain any role it may have played in a massive wildfire last month that leveled the Northern California town of Paradise and killed at least 86 people.

Investigators have not determined the cause of the wildfire that began Nov. 8, but speculation has centered on PG&E, which reported an outage around the time and place that the fire ignited.

The judge could impose new requirements on the utility if it's found to have violated its probation in the pipeline case. The company already has been ordered to pay a $3 million fine, run television commercials publicizing its convictions and have an independent monitor oversee the safety of its gas pipeline system.

PG&E said it is focused on assessing infrastructure to further improve safety and help protect customers from the "ever increasing" threat of wildfires.

"We are committed to working together with our state and community partners and across all sectors and disciplines to develop comprehensive safety solutions that provide safe, reliable gas and electric service to our customers in the future," the utility said in a statement.

In a court filing late Monday, it said any determination that it started a wildfire by recklessly operating power lines in violation of law would have bearing on its probation in the criminal case.

State fire officials had yet to release their conclusions about the fire that destroyed Paradise, PG&E said in its filing. But it said PG&E employees working at nearby facilities were among the first to observe the fire, and one of them contacted a PG&E switchboard, which then called emergency services.

House Democrats unveil measure to re-open government

WASHINGTON (AP)—House Democrats unveiled a package of bills Monday that would re-open the federal government without approving funding for President Donald Trump's border wall with Mexico, establishing an early confrontation that will test the new power dynamic in Washington.

The House is preparing to vote as soon as the new Congress convenes Thursday, as one of the first acts after Democrats take control, according to an aide who was not authorized to discuss the plan and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Democrats under Nancy Pelosi are all but certain to swiftly approve the two bills, making good on their pledge to try to quickly resolve the partial government shutdown that's now in its second week. What's unclear is whether the Republican-led Senate, under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., will consider either measure — or if Trump would sign them into law.

"It would be the height of irresponsibility and political cynicism for Senate Republicans to now reject the same legislation they have already supported," Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement late Monday.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The package does not include the $5 billion Trump wants for the wall on the southern border.

The president told Fox News Channel in an interview Monday that he was "ready, willing and able" to negotiate. He added: "No, we are not giving up. We have to have border security and the wall is a big part of border security."

McConnell spokesman Donald Stewart made it clear Senate Republicans will not take action without Trump's backing. "It's simple: The Senate is not going to send something to the president that he won't sign," he said.

Republican senators are refusing to vote on any bills until all sides, including Trump, are in agreement. Senators were frustrated that Trump had dismissed their earlier legislation to avert the shutdown.

House Democrats did not confer with Senate Republicans on the package, but the bills are expected to have some bipartisan support because they reflect earlier spending measures already hashed out between the parties and chambers.

One bill will temporarily fund the Department of Homeland Security at current levels, with $1.3 billion for border security, through Feb. 8, while talks continue.

The other will be on a measure made up of six other bipartisan bills — some that have already passed the Senate — to fund the departments of Agriculture, Interior, Housing and Urban Development and others closed by the partial shutdown. They would provide money through the remainder of the fiscal year, to Sept. 30.

The House is planning two separate votes for Thursday. If approved, the bills would go to the Senate.

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Nation

Congress leaders invited to White House for border briefing

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Donald Trump on Tuesday invited congressional leaders to a White House briefing on border security as the partial government shutdown dragged on over funding for a border wall, with Trump tweeting, "Let's make a deal?"

The briefing would happen Wednesday, the day before the Democrats take control of the House, but the exact agenda wasn't immediately clear, according to a person with knowledge of the briefing who was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Republican leaders will be attending. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as the top incoming House Republicans, Kevin McCarthy of California and Steve Scalise of Louisiana, are planning to be at the briefing, according to aides. Retiring Speaker Paul Ryan will not.

The Capitol is seen amid leafless tree branches in Washington, Monday, Dec. 31, 2018, as a partial government shutdown stretches into its second week. AP

Nancy Pelosi, who is expected to take over as House speaker, was also expected to attend, but she and top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer were awaiting more details. Pelosi said Democrats would take action to "end the Trump Shutdown" by passing legislation Thursday to reopen government.

"We are giving the Republicans the opportunity to take yes for an answer," Pelosi wrote In a letter to colleagues late Tuesday. "Senate Republicans have already supported this legislation, and if they reject it now, they will be fully complicit in chaos and destruction of the President's third shutdown of his term."

The White House invitation comes after House Democrats released their plan to re-open the government without approving money for a border wall—unveiling two bills to fund shuttered government agencies and put hundreds of thousands of federal workers back on the job. They planned to pass them as soon as the new Congress convenes Thursday.

Trump spent the weekend saying Democrats should return to Washington to negotiate, firing off Twitter taunts. He then revised his aides' comments to state that he really still wants to build a border wall.

On Tuesday morning, after tweeting a New Year's message to "EVERYONE INCLUDING THE HATERS AND THE FAKE NEWS MEDIA," Trump tweeted: "The Democrats, much as I suspected, have allocated no money for a new Wall. So imaginative! The problem is, without a Wall there can be no real Border Security."

But he seemed to shift tactics later in the day, appealing to Pelosi. "Border Security and the Wall 'thing' and Shutdown is not where Nancy Pelosi wanted to start her tenure as Speaker! Let's make a deal?" he tweeted.

Whether the Republican-led Senate, under McConnell, would consider the Democratic bills—or if Trump would sign either into law—was unclear. McConnell spokesman Donald Stewart said Senate Republicans would not take action without Trump's backing.

"It's simple: The Senate is not going to send something to the president that he won't sign," Stewart said.

Even if only symbolic, the passage of the bills in the House would put fresh pressure on the president. At the same time, administration officials said Trump was in no rush for a resolution to the impasse.

Trump believes he has public opinion on his side and, at very least, his base of supporters behind him, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Spacecraft opens new year with flyby on solar system's edge

LAUREL, Md. (AP)—NASA's New Horizons spacecraft pulled off the most distant exploration of another world Tuesday, skimming past a tiny, icy object 4 billion miles from Earth that looks to be shaped like a bowling pin.

Flight controllers in Maryland declared success 10 hours after the high-risk, middle-of-the-night encounter at the mysterious body known as Ultima Thule on the frozen fringes of our solar system, an astounding 1 billion miles (1.6 billion kilometers) beyond Pluto.

"I don't know about all of you, but I'm really liking this 2019 thing so far," lead scientist Alan Stern of Southwest Research Institute said to applause. "I'm here to tell you that last night, overnight, the United States spacecraft New Horizons conducted the farthest exploration in the history of humankind, and did so spectacularly."

The close approach came a half-hour into the new year, and 3 ½ years after New Horizons' unprecedented swing past Pluto.

For Ultima Thule—which wasn't even known when New Horizons departed Earth in 2006—the endeavor was more difficult. The spacecraft zoomed within 2,200 miles (3,500 kilometers) of it, more than three times closer than the Pluto flyby.

Operating on autopilot, New Horizons was out of radio contact with controllers at Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory from late Monday afternoon until late Tuesday morning. Scientists wanted the spacecraft staring down Ultima Thule and collecting data, not turning toward Earth to phone home.

Mission operations manager Alice Bowman said she was more nervous this time than she was with Pluto in 2015 because of the challenges and distance, so vast that messages take more than six hours, one way, to cross the 4 billion miles (6.4 billion kilometers). When a solid radio link finally was acquired and team members reported that their spacecraft systems were green, or good, she declared with relief: "We have a healthy spacecraft." Later, she added to more applause: "We did it again."

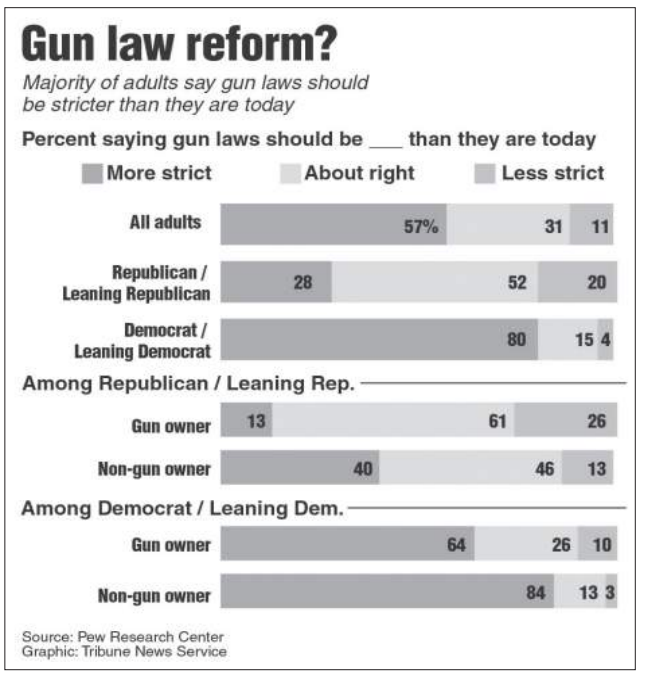
Washington bans anyone under 21 from buying assault rifles

SEATTLE (AP)—Washington on Tuesday joined a handful of other states that ban anyone under 21 from buying a semi-automatic assault rifle after voters passed a sweeping firearms measure in November that has drawn a court challenge from gun-rights advocates.

The ballot initiative seeks to curb gun violence by toughening background checks for people buying assault rifles, increasing the age limit to buy those firearms and requiring the safe storage of all guns. Only the age-limit portion of the measure goes into effect on Jan. 1; the rest becomes law on July 1.

Kristen Ellingboe, a spokeswoman for the Washington Alliance for Gun Responsibility, said the initiative was one of the most comprehensive gun-violence prevention measures to pass in the United States. It specifically targeted "semi-automatic assault rifles" in response to mass shootings across the country, she said.

"We've seen that assault rifles are the weapon of choice for mass shootings, and when they're used, more people are killed and injured," Ellingboe said.


Gun law reform?
Majority of adults say gun laws should be stricter than they are today
Percent saying gun laws should be ___ than they are today
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About right
Less strict
All adults 57% 31 11
Republican / Leaning Republican 28 52 20
Democrat / Leaning Democrat 80 15 4
Among Republican / Leaning Rep.
Gun owner 13 61 26
Non-gun owner 40 46 13
Among Democrat / Leaning Dem.
Gun owner 64 26 10
Non-gun owner 84 13 3
Source: Pew Research Center
Graphic: Tribune News Service

Fifty-nine percent of Washington voters approved Initiative 1639 in the Nov. 6 general election.

"We've see time and again that Washington voters want action to prevent gun violence in our state," Ellingboe said. "They showed that again by supporting 1639 by a wide margin."

Opponents have sued to block it.

"Starting today, young adults between the ages of 18 to 20 will have their rights to purchase semi-automatic rifles stripped away," said Dave Workman, a spokesman for the Bellevue, Washington-based Second Amendment Foundation.

The federal lawsuit says the measure violates the Second and 14th amendments of the Constitution as well as gun sellers' rights under the Commerce Clause. Plaintiffs in the lawsuit are firearms dealers in Spokane and Vancouver, a 19-year-old competitive shooter, a 19-year-old in the Army Reserves, a 20-year-old recreational shooter, the Second Amendment Foundation and the National Rifle Association.

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson said he "looks forward to representing the people of the state of Washington in court against the NRA."

"The gun lobby is trying to thwart the will of nearly 60 percent of Washingtonian voters who supported common sense gun reform in our state," he said in an email.

The full measure, when it goes into effect later this year, will expand the background check process to ensure that vetting for rifle purchases is the same as for buying pistols.

Now, people in Washington who buy long guns are run through the FBI's National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS. Background checks for handgun sales are done by local law enforcement agencies that can access NICS as well as more detailed records that might expose mental health issues or harder-to-find criminal records. And you must be 21 to purchase a pistol.

Asia

China's leader urges action on unification with Taiwan

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday urged both sides to reach an early consensus on the unification of China and Taiwan and not leave the issue for future generations.

No one or no party can stop the trend toward unification, the Chinese leader said in a speech devoted to Taiwan, calling independence for the self-governing island against history and a dead-end.

"We are willing to create a vast space for peaceful unification, but we will never leave any room for any sort of Taiwan independence separatist activities," he said.

■■■

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Taiwanese treasure their autonomy from China, the leader of the self-governing island said Tuesday, warning city and county officials to be open about and exercise caution in any dialogue with the Chinese.

President Tsai Ing-wen's remarks come after major gains by a Beijing-friendly opposition party in local elections in late November.

"The election results absolutely don't mean Taiwan's basic public opinion wants us to give up our self-rule," she said in an 11-minute New Year's address at the presidential office. "And they absolutely don't mean that the Taiwanese people want us to give ground on our autonomy."

China and Taiwan have been governed separately since the Chinese civil war of the 1940s, when Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists lost to Mao Zedong's Communists. The Nationalists rebased their government to Taiwan, but China insists that the two sides must eventually unite, by force if necessary.

The Nationalist Party, which in recent years has favored closer ties with Beijing, won 15 of 22 major seats in the local elections, reversing an advantage held by Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party. Tsai takes a more guarded view toward relations with China.

"What's really needed between the two sides is a practical understanding of the differences between values, beliefs and lifestyles," she said.

China resents Tsai for declining to recognize its condition for dialogue: that each side sees itself as part of one China. Beijing has sent military aircraft near the island, squeezed Taiwan's foreign diplomacy and scaled back Taiwan-bound group tourism.

■■■

Taiwan and China split in a civil war that brought the Communists to power in China in 1949. The rival Nationalists set up their own government on the island about 160 kilometers (100 miles) off the Chinese mainland.

Xi proposed talks between the two sides to work out "a systematic arrangement for the peaceful development of the cross-strait relationship."

While Xi said that people on both sides want peaceful reunification, it's unclear how his message will be received on the other side of the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said Tuesday that its people want to maintain their self-rule and autonomy.

Xi pledged that unification would be under a one-country, two-system framework that would respect the Taiwanese social system and way of life and guarantee their property rights, religious beliefs and other rights.

"The political disputes that have existed for a long time ... affect the healthy and continuous development of the cross-strait relationship and cannot be passed from generation to generation," he said.

AP

Chinese Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Yang, center, speaks during an event to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2019.

ASIAN BRIEFS

2 dead, nearly 30 wounded in bomb blast at Philippine mall

COTABATO, Philippines (AP)—Suspected Muslim militants remotely detonated a bomb near the entrance of a mall in the southern Philippines on Monday as people did last-minute shopping ahead of New Year's Eve celebrations, killing at least two and wounding nearly 30, officials said. The bomb went off near a baggage counter at the entrance of the South Seas mall in Cotabato city, wounding shoppers, vendors and commuters. Authorities recovered another unexploded bomb nearby as government forces imposed a security lockdown in the city, military and police officials said. Maj. Gen. Cirilito Sobejana said by phone that an initial investigation showed the design of the bomb was similar to those used in the past by local Muslim militants who have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group. Government forces launched an offensive against the militants belonging to a group called Daulah Islamiyah last week and at least seven of the militants died in the fighting, Sobejana said.

Indonesia landslide leaves 15 dead; 20 still missing

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Rescuers recovered six more bodies buried under tons of mud from a landslide that crashed onto a hilly village on Indonesia's main island of Java, bringing the death toll to 15, officials said Tuesday. The landslide that plunged down surrounding hills just before sunset Monday buried 30 houses in Sirnaresmi village in West Java's Sukabumi district. Sixty people who lost their homes were forced to move to a temporary shelter, said National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho. Television video showed relatives wailing as they watched rescuers pull a mud-caked body from a devastated hamlet. It was placed in a blue bag and taken away for burial. Authorities struggled to bring tractors and other heavy equipment over washed-out roads after torrential rains sent mud and rocks crashing onto the hilly hamlets. Hundreds of police, soldiers and residents dug through the debris with their bare hands, shovels and hoes as heavy rain hindered their efforts.

Coronation of Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn set for May 4-6

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn will have his official coronation on May 4, the palace announced Tuesday. The coronation will be more than two years after Vajiralongkorn succeeded his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died at age 88 after reigning for seven decades. The palace said the coronation ceremonies for Vajiralongkorn, 66, will be held on May 4-6, with the monarch making a public appearance on the last day. Bhumibol's coronation, held almost four years after he was named king, took place in 1950 on May 5, a date that is a public holiday in Thailand. Major royal ceremonies in Thailand are usually very ornate, but Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said in June last year that Vajiralongkorn had expressed the desire that his coronation be held in a relatively modest manner, though in keeping with elaborate royal tradition. Vajiralongkorn gave a New Year's Eve address televised Monday night, wishing the Thai people good health, happiness and prosperity, and urging them to act virtuously for the sake of the nation. His New Year's greeting card, another tradition, expressed similar sentiments.

Bangladesh prime minister denies accusations of rigged vote

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—The day after winning a record fourth term in power, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina trumpeted her accomplishments and dismissed opposition claims that the vote was rigged.

Hasina's ruling alliance won virtually every parliamentary seat in the general election, according to official results released Monday, giving her a third consecutive term despite opposition allegations of intimidation. Hasina earlier served a single term.

The coalition led by Hasina's Awami League party won 288 out of 300 seats—96 percent—in Sunday's polls, Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said. The opposition alliance led by prominent lawyer Kamal Hossain won only seven seats.

The opposition rejected the outcome, with Hossain calling the election "farcical" and demanding a new election be held under the authority of a "nonpartisan government."

But Chief Election Commissioner K.M. Nurul Huda ruled out any revote, saying there were no reports of large irregularities.

"There is no scope to hold the election again," Huda said. He said the turnout in Sunday's vote was 80 percent.

Hasina's main rival for decades has been former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, whom a court deemed ineligible to run for office because she was sentenced to more than two years in prison after being convicted of corruption. Zia's supporters say the charges were politically motivated.

In Zia's absence, opposition parties formed a coalition led by Hossain, an 82-year-old former member of Hasina's Awami League who served as foreign minister under Hasina's father, Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's founding leader.

The political opposition and groups including Human Rights Watch say Hasina has become increasingly authoritarian. More than a dozen people were killed in election-related violence Sunday, and the election campaign was dogged by allegations of the arrest and jailing of thousands of Hasina's opponents.

In a wide-ranging discussion with foreign journalists and election observers at her official residence in Dhaka on Monday, Hasina refused a suggestion that she offer her political foes an olive branch.

"The opposition you see, who are they? The main party, BNP, it was established by a military dictator (Zia's husband, Ziaur Rahman) who introduced martial law in this country, there was no constitutional right of the people.

World

Russian baby rescued after nearly 36 hours in frozen rubble

MOSCOW (AP)—Laboring through sub-freezing temperatures, Russian rescue workers were digging into a sprawling heap of jagged rubble from a collapsed apartment building when one heard the faintest sound.

It was the sound of life.

On Tuesday, to everyone's delight and surprise, they pulled a baby boy out of the rubble alive, nearly 36 hours after the disaster that blew apart his home. His father called it "a New Year's miracle."

The building collapse in the Russian city of Magnitogorsk before dawn Monday has killed at least nine people so far, and officials say 32 people who lived in the building have still not been accounted for.

The collapse followed an explosion that was believed to have been caused by a gas leak.

The boy, an 11-month-old named Ivan Fokin, was in extremely serious condition, officials said, with fractures, a head injury and suffering from hypothermia and frostbite after his ordeal in temperatures around minus 20 degrees Celsius (minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit).

He was flown to Moscow late Tuesday in a desperate attempt to save his life. He was in stable condition on arrival in the capital, the head of the national public health institute Vladimir Uiba was quoted as telling state news agency Tass.

Although Ivan's prospects for survival appeared dire, "it's a New Year's miracle," his father Yevgeny was quoted as saying by the RT satellite TV channel.

The father was at work when his wife phoned to say the building had collapsed. She escaped the rubble with a 3-year-old son, Russian news reports said.

"I was sleeping on the couch with my older son, hugging him and the young one was sleeping in his baby bed," mother Olga Fokina said on Russian TV. "I and the older one fell down and quickly got out and I didn't know what happened to the baby bed afterward."

Rescue worker Pyotr Gritsenko said on Russian television that baby's discovery came after one of the crew heard faint cries.

"They stopped all the equipment. He began to cry louder," but the crew couldn't find him, he said. A search dog was brought in and confirmed that someone was under the rubble, focusing the rescue effort.

The father said he helped rescuers dig in the rubble and "showed them a place where he approximately could be."

Regional governor Boris Dubrovsky was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency that the child apparently had been protected by being in a crib and being wrapped warmly.

The rescue operation, aided by powerful heaters and lights, was continuing overnight into Wednesday in the city about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) southeast of Moscow.

This photo taken from video provided by the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry taken from TV footage showing Emergency Situations employee carrying a baby boy named Ivan Fokin from an ambulance to a plane, to fly to Moscow in a desperate attempt to save his life, in an airport outside Magnitigorsk, about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) southeast of Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2019. AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the accident site on Monday and went to a local hospital, where he spoke to a 13-year old-boy who had head injuries and frostbite after spending an hour under the rubble.

"You will get well soon, you are a fighter," Putin told the boy, one of five people hospitalized from the building collapse.

Russian officials say the odds of finding anyone else alive in the debris look increasingly slim, given the extreme weather.

Late Tuesday, three people died in Magnitogorsk about two kilometers (1.2 miles) down the same street as the collapsed building when their passenger van exploded and caught fire. Police said the vehicle was carrying gas canisters.

In other Russian holiday disasters, seven people including a couple and their three children died in a house fire in the town of Orsk, 1,500 kilometers (900 miles) southeast of Moscow, Interfax reported. The fire early Tuesday is believed to have been caused by an electrical short-circuit, the report said.

In Moscow, the mayor fired the director of the city's renowned Gorky Park after 13 people were injured when a wooden pedestrian bridge packed with New Year's celebrants collapsed.

Video on Russian television showed a section of the bridge collapsing early Tuesday as the national anthem played on loudspeakers, marking the beginning of 2019. The park in central Moscow is a popular gathering place for the holiday.

The bridge, 350 meters (1,100 feet) long, runs along the park's enormous outdoor ice rink.

Peru's chief prosecutor attempts to derail corruption probe

LIMA, Peru (AP)—Peru's attorney general late Monday dismissed a team investigating the far-reaching Odebrecht corruption scandal, setting off street protests in cities across the country.

President Martin Vizcarra quickly denounced the move, saying it undercuts Peru's drive to purge corruption.

"The head-on fight against corruption and impunity is a priority of this government," Vizcarra said on Twitter.

Two of the five supreme prosecutors called the decision by Attorney General Pedro Chavarry "a death blow" to the anti-corruption fight and urged him to reverse it.

The dismissal came just weeks before the Brazilian construction giant was set to reveal key evidence against powerful former Peruvian officials.

Executives at Odebrecht have acknowledged that it distributed millions in bribes across Latin America, including $29 million in Peru, to obtain lucrative government contracts.

The prosecutor's office is investigating all the Peruvian presidents who governed from 2001 to 2018 for alleged crimes of corruption and money laundering.

Chavarry's action set off demonstrations by hundreds of citizens in the capital of Lima and three other cities. Protesters shouted phrases like "Out with Chavarry" as they waved Peruvian flags.

The attorney general called a news conference to announce his decision but he then took no questions. He said the dismissal was necessary to nullify the appointment of the prosecutor heading the team of investigators.

The removal imperils an agreement with Odebrecht to participate in the investigation entailing some 40 separate cases.

Brazil's Bolsonaro assumes presidency, promises big changes

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP)—Jair Bolsonaro was sworn in as Brazil's president Tuesday, taking the reins of Latin America's largest and most populous nation with promises to overhaul myriad aspects of daily life and put an end to business-as-usual governing.

For the far-right former army captain, the New Year's Day inauguration was the culmination of a journey from a marginalized and even ridiculed congressman to a leader who many Brazilians hope can combat endemic corruption as well as violence that routinely gives the nation the dubious distinction of being world leader in total homicides.

A fan of U.S. President Donald Trump, the 63-year-old longtime congressman rose to power on an anti-corruption and pro-gun agenda that has energized conservatives and hard-right supporters after four consecutive presidential election wins by the left-leaning Workers' Party.

Bolsonaro was the latest of several far-right leaders around the globe who have come to power by riding waves of anger at the establishment and promising to ditch the status quo.

"Congratulations to President @jairbolsonaro who just made a great inauguration speech," Trump tweeted. "The U.S.A. is with you!"

Tuesday's festivities in the capital of Brasilia began with a motorcade procession along the main road leading to Congress and other government buildings. Bolsonaro and his wife, Michelle, stood up in an open-top Rolls-Royce and waved to thousands of onlookers.

They were surrounded by dozens of guards on horses and plain-clothes bodyguards who ran beside the car.

Once inside Congress, Bolsonaro and his vice president, retired Gen. Hamilton Mourao, took the oath of office. Bolsonaro then read a short speech that included many of the far-right positions he staked out during the campaign.

He promised to combat the "ideology of gender" teaching in schools, "respect our Judeo-Christian tradition" and "prepare children for the job market, not political militancy."

"I call on all congressmen to help me rescue Brazil from corruption, criminality and ideological submission," he said.

A short time later, Bolsonaro spoke to thousands of supporters outside, promising to "free Brazil" from socialism and political correctness.

As he spoke, supporters began to chant "Myth! Myth! Myth!"—a nickname that began years ago with internet memes of Bolsonaro and became more common during last year's campaign. Bolsonaro's middle name is Messias, or Messiah in English, and many supporters believe he was chosen by God to lead Brazil, an assertion bolstered after Bolsonaro survived a stabbing during a campaign rally in September.

During Tuesday's speech, Bolsonaro stopped at one point, pulled out a Brazilian flag and wildly waved it, prompting roars from the crowd.

"Our flag will never be red," Bolsonaro said, a reference to communism. "Our flag will only be red if blood is needed to keep it green and yellow."

Brasilia was under tight security, with 3,000 police patrolling the event. Military tanks, fighter jets and even anti-aircraft missiles also were deployed. Journalists were made to arrive at locations seven hours before festivities began, and many complained on Twitter of officials confiscating food they had brought for the wait.

The increased security came at Bolsonaro's request. His intestine was pierced when a knife-wielding man stabbed and nearly killed him, and today Bolsonaro wears a colostomy bag. His sons, politicians themselves, had insisted their father could be targeted by radicals, but security officials have not spoken of threats.

Bolsonaro did little moderating since being elected in October, with progressives and liberals decrying stances that they say are homophobic, sexist and racist.

Focus

WINTER IS SHRINKING, study finds, posing new fire and water risks

By HANNAH FRY
Los Angeles Times

Across the mountains of the West, the landscape of winter is changing.

Deep snowpacks that held fast through winter, then melted in a torrent each spring, are instead seeping away earlier in the year. The period of winter weather is shrinking, too, with autumn lasting longer and spring starting earlier.

The findings by Amato Evan, a professor of atmospheric and climate science with Scripps Institution of Oceanography, show changes to Western hydrology that could jeopardize water resources, flood control, fire management and winter recreation.

His results were published in December in the Journal of Applied Meteorology and Climatology, and presented at the American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Aerial photos and snow surveys illustrate how levels vary from year to year. But Evan's study looked not only at how much snow there is, but also how it accumulates and then runs off.

Climate models have predicted the snowpack would diminish earlier in the season and melt more gradually as the planet warms. Evan affirmed those projections through an analysis of data from 1982 through 2017. "There are theoretical models that say as the planet continues to warm, this is what should happen; snow melts earlier in the year, and doesn't melt as fast as it does in the springtime," he said. "We went back to the mathematics, and said, that's actually exactly what we're seeing."

The readings come from 400 snow telemetry sensors across the West. They're made of cushions filled with antifreeze that compress and expand as snow falls and melts, and sensors that record the changes. The data are hard to work with, though, because there's so much day-to-day variation in storms and snow levels at each site.

"If you're interested in climate, all those little blips obscure how is that changing over the last four decades," Evan said.

To address that, Evan devised a mathematical formula to cut through the noise of the data and reveal trends in snowfall and melting. The calculations showed how the whole system was shifting because of higher temperatures.

"If we use the mathematical analysis, it tells you more about physical processes," he said.

Dan Cayan, a Scripps researcher who studies climate impacts on water, wildfire, health, and agriculture, and was not involved in the study, said those changes could upend water management systems in the West.

"Of course snowpack has traditionally been used as an extra reservoir in the western states, and particularly in California," he said. "It has some really nice properties, in that it doesn't melt off until the latter spring and early summer, when there are a lot of water needs, particularly with our agricultural landscapes."

Moreover, he said, California's water system is designed to harness powerful storms that pose both risks and benefits.

"Water resources and water hazards are intimately tied together in California," Cayan said.

Western mountains have historically released their water after winter storms have passed, but with snow melt and storms occurring at the same time, the risk of floods increases. The near collapse of the Oroville Dam in February 2017 illustrates the kinds of dangers California could face with earlier runoff.

"We're getting snow melt at a time when a big storm which has both rain and snow could happen, and could overwhelm the flood control capacity of a given reservoir in that earlier season," he said. "So that's a feature of climate change that is really a threat, that water managers are going to have to contend with."

Catastrophic wildfires are another peril of the changing regimen. Snow melt dampens the risk of wildfire for California's forests during spring and early summer. If it runs off sooner, that could leave those woodlands parched and fragile.

"When snow melts earlier in the year... that means the soils dry out earlier in the year," Evan said. "That means those forest ecosystems become drier. So in a sense, we can lengthen the fire season."

Early snow melt also poses problems for tourism, particularly for mid- and lower-elevation ski resorts, and threatens part of the state's natural heritage, Cayan said.

"The snowpack is such an iconic feature, for many reasons," he said.

The study's findings show that the pace of climate change is now catching up to projections, and can be seen on the ground, Evan said.

"Some of these results really have only been seen in modeling studies," he said. "The fact that we can see them now in observations means that climate change in the western U.S. is not something we will see in the next 50 years. It's something that's happening now. We can see it right now."

AP
Snow blankets the Sierra Nevada crest north of Bishop along U.S. Highway 395 on Jan. 6, 2017 in Round Valley, Calif.

Life & Style

Fireworks, superstars ring in the new year in Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Tens of thousands of people rang in the new year across Las Vegas, watching fireworks launch from the top of some of the city's iconic casino-resorts, attending superstar performances at various venues and participating in a celebratory midnight toast.

Officials estimated more than 300,000 people gathered on the Las Vegas Strip for a celebration anchored by an eight-minute fireworks show, while thousands more convened in the area's downtown entertainment district to enjoy live music. And for those who decided to head into 2019 indoors, Lady Gaga, Celine Dion, Gwen Stefani and other stars helped them do so in proper form at different venues along the world-famous corridor.

"No other city in the world does it like Las Vegas, and that's why it's called America's party," Lawrence Weekly, chairman of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, said during a news conference announcing details of the celebrations. "Listen, some folks, and I know some of you guys, are going to look at me and say "Really, Weekly, the shame? But some folks stand outside in frigid cold just to watch a ball drop.′ But where else in the world do you have a great concert all up and down and iconic boulevard?"

New Year's Eve is worth an estimated $403 million to the city, according to the convention and visitors authority. The agency responsible for promoting Las Vegas expected 318,000 people to travel to the city for the holiday and projected that nearly all the city's more than 147,000 hotel rooms would be booked.

Federal agents and local police were out in force, with teams of police stationed inside most major casinos on the Strip, plainclothes officers in the crowd and snipers keeping an eye on things from rooftops. Officials also banned backpacks, ice chests, strollers and glass items from the street celebrations as a safety measure.

The theme for this year's fireworks show was "Vegas Nights." Organizers tried to emulate the sense of excitement of an evening in Las Vegas with fireworks in rich purple, green, gold and cherry red hues.

The 80,000 pyrotechnic firings were choreographed to a custom soundtrack that includes Frank Sinatra's "Luck Be a Lady," Lionel Ritchie's "All Night Long," Celine Dion's "I Drove All Night" and Gaga's "Marry the Night." The show began at the Stratosphere casino-resort, and fireworks then launched from the Venetian, Treasure Island, Caesars Palace, Planet Hollywood, Aria and MGM Grand casino-resorts.

130th Rose Parade boasts floral floats, singer Chaka Khan

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Floral floats and marching bands took to the streets under a sunny California sky as the 130th Rose Parade drew hundreds of thousands of spectators on New Year's Day and millions more watched on TV.

Among the fanciful floats was an award-winning entry from the UPS Store that featured a book-reading, ballet-practicing ostrich named Olive decked out with more than 30,000 pale pink carnations.

The annual extravaganza in Pasadena kicked off with a performance by singer Chaka Khan, the grand marshal of the parade, and featured 40 floats decorated with countless flowers and waving celebrities. The theme was "The Melody of Life."

There was plenty of sunshine and calm breezes, with temperatures reaching about 60 degrees (16 degrees Celsius) after a chilly and windy night. Dozens of people staked out prime viewing spots on Monday and slept bundled up along the route, where overnight temperatures dipped into the 30s (about 3 degrees Celsius).

The parade was briefly interrupted when a float celebrating U.S. railroad heritage broke down and erupted in smoke. Marching bands were able to move around the Chinese American Heritage Foundation's "Harmony Through Union" entry, but other floats couldn't, causing a brief backup.

"We've had a bit of a malfunction," Leeza Gibbons told KTLA-TV viewers. "They're scrambling right now."

The disabled float was eventually towed from the route, and the parade resumed. The interruption caused long gaps, and some people began leaving until a monitor came along yelling, "The parade's not over!"

Spectators shouted, "Thank you," to U.S. Forest Service firefighters marching behind a float with Smoky Bear and traded "alohas" with horseback riders from Hawaii.

California Polytechnic State Universities' entry, "Far Out Frequencies," was awarded for its use of statice, marigolds and strawflowers grown on the San Luis Obispo campus. It featured a pair of astronauts playing music to communicate with aliens they encountered on a distant planet.

AP

The Stella Rosa Wines float with the band Kool & The Gang won the Grand Marshal Award at the 130th Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif., Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2019.

UK honors cave rescue divers, Twiggy, Monty Python's Palin

LONDON (AP)—British divers who rescued young soccer players trapped in a flooded cave in Thailand are among those being recognized in Britain's New Year's Honors List, along with 1960s model Twiggy and Monty Python star Michael Palin.

Twiggy, a model who shot to stardom during the Beatles era, will become a "dame"—the female equivalent of a knight—while Palin, whose second career has seen him become an acclaimed travel documentary maker, receives a knighthood.

Jim Carter, who played the acerbic Mr. Carson in "Downton Abbey," was also recognized, as was filmmaker Christopher Nolan, director of "Inception" and "Dunkirk," and best-selling author Philip Pullman, creator of the "Dark Materials" trilogy.

The list released Friday also named 43 people who responded quickly to the extremist attacks in Manchester and London in 2017.

The honors process starts with nominations from the public, which are winnowed down by committees and sent to the prime minister before the various honors are bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II or senior royals next year.

The 92-year-old monarch has increasingly called on her children and grandchildren to hand out the coveted awards.

Divers Joshua Bratchley, Lance Corporal Connor Roe and Vernon Unsworth will be made Members of the Order of the British Empire for their roles in the risky Thai cave rescue in June and July.

Four other British cave divers will receive civilian gallantry awards for their roles in the thrilling rescue of 12 boys and their coach, who were trapped in the cave for more than two weeks.

Richard Stanton and John Volanthen, the first to reach the stranded children and their coach, have been awarded the George Medal, while Christopher Jewell and Jason Mallinson received the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Twiggy, whose modeling career lasted for decades, burst on the London Mod scene as one of the original "It" girls. She earned worldwide fame by 17 and went on to a career in theater and films.

"It's wonderful, but it makes me giggle," said Twiggy, 69, whose real name is Lesley Lawson. "The hardest thing has been keeping it a secret."

Palin's knighthood recognizes his contribution to travel, culture and geography. He said the news had not sunk in yet but noted "I have been a knight before, in Python films. I have been several knights, including Sir Galahad."

"I don't think it will (sink in) until I see the envelopes addressing me as Sir Michael Palin," said the 75-year-old.

After a decade of dormancy, Chaka Khan blooms again

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—If Chaka Khan were a flower, she'd be a perennial.

"Because I go dormant and then I..." Khan stops and gracefully lifts her arms together, then slowly brings her hands apart, like a tulip emerging in spring.

"I've done it many, many times," explained the singer, perhaps best known for her multimillion selling 1984 cover of Prince's "I Feel For You."

On the brink of her first new album in a decade, and, on New Year's Day, serving as grand marshal at the Rose Parade, Chaka Khan is in bloom again.

After receiving the call from the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Association, the term "grand marshal" had the 65-year-old Khan's mind running wild.

"I'll tell you what I visualized," Khan recalled. "I imagined myself with a baton, marching in the front. 'I'm leading the whole parade.' That's what I thought."

Not even close.

Instead, Khan will be seated on a comfy bench in the back seat of a classic convertible, which will slowly make its way past the thousands along the 5.5-mile parade route. (The parade will also be seen by millions more on TV.)

"This is all new for me," the 65-year-old Khan commented. "I love challenges. And I love new stuff."

Khan will also open parade festivities with a performance. Publicists were unable to confirm whether the grand marshal-performer double duty is a Rose Parade first, but they did note it was the first time in recent memory. Khan said she would sing two songs: "I Feel for You," as well as "Hello Happiness," the second single from the new album.

The new song is not a political statement—unless you want it to be.

Judge denies Kevin Spacey's request to skip court appearance

Spacey

BOSTON (AP)—Former "House of Cards" star Kevin Spacey must appear in a Massachusetts court on accusations that he groped a young man in 2016, a judge ruled on Monday.

The 59-year-old Oscar-winning actor had argued he should be excused from attending his Jan. 7 arraignment at the Nantucket District Court because his presence would "amplify the negative publicity already generated in connection with this case." But Judge Thomas Barrett denied Spacey's request.

Spacey has said he will plead not guilty to felony indecent assault and battery.

The allegations were first brought in November 2017, when former Boston TV anchor Heather Unruh told reporters that Spacey groped her teenage son during a chance encounter in the crowded bar of a Nantucket restaurant.

An attorney for Spacey, Juliane Balliro, had argued that Spacey's presence at his arraignment would only "heighten prejudicial media interest in the case" and increase the risk of contaminating the jury pool.

Emails seeking comment on the judge's ruling were sent to Spacey's attorneys and the district attorney's office handling the case.

Neither Spacey nor his lawyers have addressed the allegation publicly, but the actor released a video last week in the voice of Frank Underwood, his character on Netflix's "House of Cards" in which he said, "I'm certainly not going to pay the price for the thing I didn't do."

It was unclear whether he was addressing the criminal charge.

Spacey's attorneys have also questioned the evidence against him.

Los Angeles-based attorney Alan Jackson noted during a hearing that Unruh's son did not report the allegations to police right way, lied about his age saying he was 23, and said he was so intoxicated he may have blacked out shortly after Spacey allegedly groped him, according to an audio recording of the hearing obtained by The Boston Globe.

Unruh told reporters that her son didn't report the assault at the time because he was embarrassed and scared. Her family decided to come forward after others went public with allegations of sexual misconduct against Spacey and other celebrities, she said.

Rooms near 50th anniversary Woodstock venue are a hot ticket

BETHEL, N.Y. (AP)—Finding a place to stay for next year's 50th anniversary Woodstock concert may not be a groovy experience for anyone hoping to score a room near the venue.

The Times Herald-Record of Middletown reports that many motels, bed-and-breakfasts and Airbnb rentals are already sold out in Sullivan County, a rural area 85 miles (140 kilometers) northwest of New York City.

The Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, a concert venue built on the original Woodstock site in the town of Bethel, announced last week that it will host the golden anniversary event Aug. 16-18.

Most motels and B&Bs closest to the concert venue have been booked solid for some time.

People interested in attending the anniversary concert are being advised to check out the Sullivan County Visitors Association website for lodging information.

Ricky Martin and husband welcome baby girl

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Ricky Martin is starting the new year with a new bundle of joy.

The Grammy-nominated singer announced the arrival of his daughter with an Instagram post showing off the infant's tiny hands. Martin says the girl is named Lucia.

Martin's post didn't include any additional details, other than that the baby girl is healthy. Martin's post says his family, which includes husband Jwan Yosef and 10-year-old twin sons, have "fallen in love with Lucia."

The "Living La Vida Loca" singer garnered an Emmy nomination earlier this year for his supporting role in the FX series "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story."

Santa, romance and horror? 'Bird Box' bucks holiday trend

NEW YORK (AP)—For so long, movies around the holidays have been merry and bright. Lately, more and more seem murderous and designed to fright.

Take this winter, where, of course, sugary options abounded, such as "Mary Poppins Returns" on the big screen and "A Christmas Prince: The Royal Wedding" on TV. Then there's the post-apocalyptic survival story "Bird Box."

Released just days before Christmas on Netflix, the Sandra Bullock-led thriller is about monstrous entities that compel any human who sees them to quickly try to kill themselves. Not exactly the stuff of sugar plum fairies.

But even though Netflix declines to release viewership numbers, "Bird Box" seems to have struck a nerve, triggering the creation of memes and online chatter for a very dark film dropped into the festive period.

"I have never ever had as much attention or as many page likes, post likes/ shares and comments on any of my other pages as I have had on this one," says Heather Drake, who started a Facebook page for fans of the story and is not affiliated with the film or distributors. "It's been insane. I can't even come close to responding to all the feedback, if that tells you anything."

Critics have been mixed toward "Bird Box," with many noting similarities to John Krasinski's "A Quiet Place." Variety complained about the "inexplicably bland ensemble" and The Hollywood Reporter sniffed that it was "not all that it might have been." The Guardian declared it "a bird-brained mess."

In some ways, it shouldn't come as a surprise that a film about monsters attacking people showed up on the online video streamer on Dec. 21. Alternate Christmas movies are all the rage these days, from "Die Hard," "In Bruges," "Kiss Kiss Bang Bang" and "Lethal Weapon."

Drake thinks the holiday timing of "Bird Box" isn't that important, noting the need for fresh and intriguing movies during the holidays far from usual stale fare like "It's a Wonderful Life" or "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

"I don't honestly think it would have mattered if it was Dec. 21 or July 21," she said. "However, Dec. 21 would give an advantage as many people are on vacation from school and work. And who doesn't want to cozy up and 'Netflix and chill' on a cold night when they don't have to worry about school or work the next day?"

Netflix's decision may also be an attempt to replicate last late-December's hit "Bright," starring Will Smith and Joel Egerton. That supernatural cop drama also wasn't received well by critics but garnered strong word-of-mouth interest and a sequel has been promised.

Bullock has been one of Hollywood's top stars since her 1994 hit "Speed" but had never made a horror movie until "Bird Box." She told The Associated Press before a special screening in New York this month that the risks she and the cast undertook were somehow appealing.

NAMED AFTER DRAGONS AP

This combination of undated photos provided by Brett Ratcliffe in December 2018 shows, from left, Gymnetis drogoni, Gymnetis rhaegali and Gymnetis viserioni beetles from South America. Ratcliffe named three of his eight newest beetle discoveries after the dragons from the HBO series "Game of Thrones" and George R.R. Martin book series "A Song of Ice and Fire."

Son-in-laws's old tablet reveals surprising secret

DEAR ABBY: My son-in-law gave me a tablet that he was not using, as he had upgraded. He removed most of his information. When I went to set up my accounts, I noticed his list of apps and passwords was still present and saw four accounts to an adult dating site.

My daughter and SIL have been together/married for four years. The tablet is less than 2 years old. I don't know what to do: (1) act like I never saw it, (2) tell him what I found and hope for a good explanation, or (3) tell my daughter. This will destroy her. Please help!

SIGN ME DEVASTATED

DEAR SIGN ME: Tell your son-in-law what you found and ask for an explanation. What he tells you will determine what steps you should take next.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and my best friend, "Bridget," do not get along. They remain civil most of the time, but one thing is threatening to ruin the peace.

When Bridget visits, she likes to bring along little toys and treats for my cats. That's fine, but she also opens bags of loose catnip and sprinkles it throughout the house. My husband hates it because the catnip gets everywhere, and it's a chore to clean up. When he politely asked Bridget to stop, she told him to "stuff it" and said the cats like it.

She continues to do it every time she comes over, and my husband has grown more and more upset. I'm not sure how to mediate this. What can I do?

CAT-ASTROPHE IN ATLANTA

DEAR CAT-ASTROPHE: At this point, Bridget isn't bringing the catnip over because she thinks your cats like it. She's doing it to antagonize your husband. If you continue allowing her to do this, it could affect your relationship with your husband, so if you're smart, you will back him up and tell her to cut it out. (Meow!)

DEAR ABBY: I'm a medical student who has been battling depression over the past few months. I didn't do well on a recent very important exam, and I've sunk even deeper into my depression.

I have tried reaching out to fellow classmates about it, but they tell me to just suck it up or assume I want attention. I tried talking to my family, but ever since the loss of a beloved pet, my parents are having a difficult time emotionally, and I don't want to trouble them even further.

I feel trapped and lonely and there's only so much more I can take of putting on a mask every day to pretend I'm happy. I'm not sure where to go from here. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

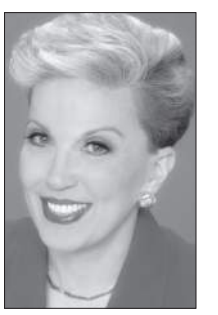
LONELY AND DEPRESSED IN CHICAGO

DEAR LONELY: Putting on a mask isn't the solution. The problem with depression is that, like any other untreated illness, it can grow worse. Because your depression began BEFORE that exam, I'm recommending you consult one of the psychiatrists at the medical school for guidance. Please don't wait to do it. You should also tell your parents, pet death or no pet death, because they need to know as well.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

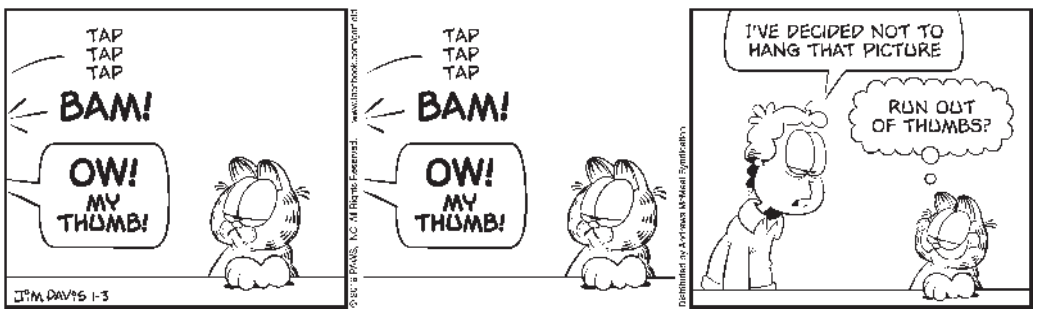
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT? IS IT BETTER TO HOLD FAST AND NEVER BACK DOWN, OR TO COMPROMISE?
I SUPPOSE IT'S BEST TO HOLD FAST WHEN YOU CAN, AND COMPROMISE WHEN YOU NEED TO.
THAT'S A LOT MORE MATURE THAN I THINK I CARE TO BE.

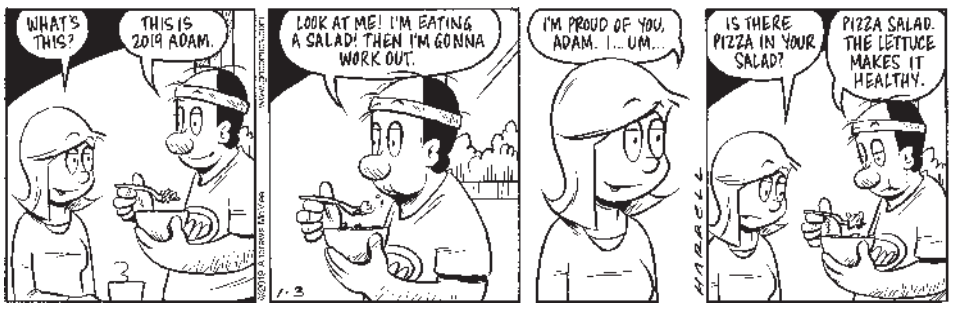
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



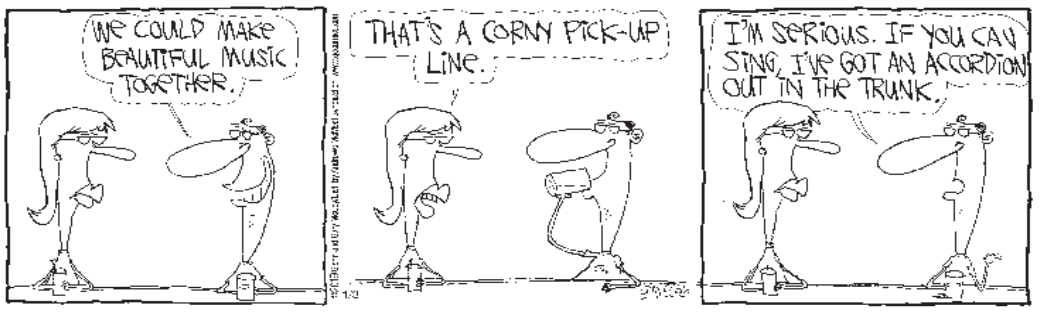
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WHAT'S THIS?
THIS IS 2019 ADAM.
LOOK AT ME! I'M EATING A SALAD! THEN I'M GONNA WORK OUT.
I'M PROUD OF YOU, ADAM. I... UM...
IS THERE PIZZA IN YOUR SALAD?
PIZZA SALAD. THE LETTUCE MAKES IT HEALTHY.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


WE COULD MAKE BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TOGETHER.
THAT'S A CORNY PICK-UP LINE.
I'M SERIOUS. IF YOU CAN SING, I'VE GOT AN ACCORDION OUT IN THE TRUNK.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Words-worth work
5 Spasm
8 Billie — King
12 Against
13 Granada gold
14 Sea eagle
15 500 sheets
16 Chess piece
17 Right on the map?
18 On an angle
20 Dines
22 Donald Duck's outfit
26 Birth-related
29 "Exodus" hero
30 Vitamin stat
31 Prior nights
32 Pvt.'s superior
33 Grant basis, at times
34 Seminary subj.
35 Take to court
36 Smartens (up)
37 Produce aisle display
40 Pan handler?
41 Rookie
45 Boyfriend
47 Business mag
49 Press
50 Formerly, once
51 French vineyard
52 Band-leader Puente
53 Makes lace
54 "Dig in!"
55 Salty septet

DOWN
1 Law firm aide, for short
2 Till bills
3 List-ending abbr.
4 Brunch cocktails
5 "Only Love" actress Marisa
6 Lyricist Gershwin
7 Mon-arch's spouse
8 Army vehicles
9 Test-paper smudges
10 Reply (Abbr.)
11 Court divider
19 Chum
21 Swiss canton
23 Beer type
24 Nantes notion
25 Tiny amounts
26 Soft ball?
27 Say it's so
28 Put on the air
32 Be enough
33 Block-heads
35 That lady
36 Golfer Michelle
38 Closes
39 Full-length
42 Party cheese
43 Greek vowel
44 Seth's son
45 Wager
46 Historic period
48 Big D.C. lobby

Solution time: 24 mins.

A	S	P	S			V	A	T		D	A	S	H
C	H	F	⁻			I		F		O	N	C	F
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C	A	L	A	M	A	R			E	X	P	O	
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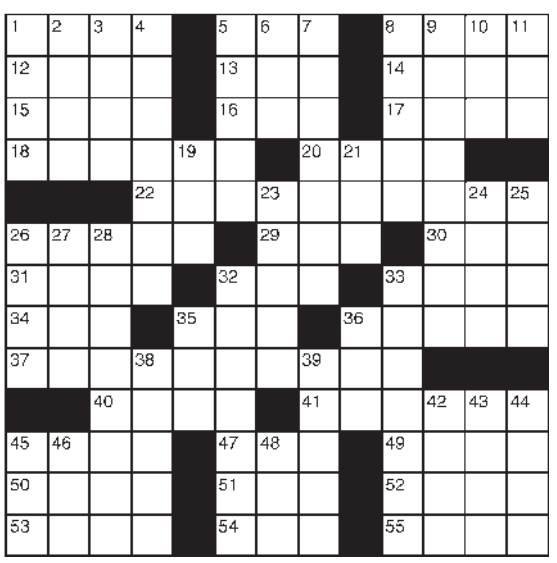
Monday's answer 12 - 31



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Brooke Williams, 35; Katie McGrath, 36; Eli Manning, 37; Danica McKellar, 44.

Happy Birthday: This will turn into an emotional year if you aren't precise regarding your likes, dislikes and intentions. Don't leave anything to chance or get into uncomfortable situations with people who are not known for being trustworthy or reliable. Pick your battles and stay focused on self-improvement, not trying to change others. Aim for continuity and maintaining your reputation. Your numbers are 8, 14, 20, 27, 34, 42, 47.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Discussions, meetings and setting up your plans for the future should be your priority. Verify any information provided before you make a decision or relay the choice you make to someone in a position of authority. Positive change is within reach. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Take a position of leadership and offer to organize and help get things running smoothly. Your hands-on approach will result in getting the support you need to carry out your plans. A financial gain looks promising. Celebrate with someone you love. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Emotions will surface if someone is dishonest or manipulative. Use your intelligence, especially where joint ventures or money matters are concerned. A physical activity will help ease stress and clear your head. Don't share personal information or passwords. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Go to the source to receive instructions or information if you want to avoid making a mistake. It's important to follow the rules and to keep records to avoid being blamed for something you didn't do. Romance is highlighted. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Learn as you go, share with your peers and discover what's available to you. You'll gather information and learn easily. What you discover will change your direction in a positive way. Networking is encouraged, and new friendships favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Check out what's going on in your community or get together with colleagues or those who share your beliefs. This will offer insight into what's going on in your personal life. Refuse to let anyone bait you into an emotional argument. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Don't make travel plans or set business meetings unless you are positive you have everything in order and ready to go. Last-minute changes will leave you in a predicament if you act before you are fully prepared. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Trust and believe in what you know and what you have done in the past. Your experience will pay off when faced with changes that other people make. Personal growth will change your beliefs and lead you on a new adventure. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Protect what you've worked so hard to keep secret. Begin a process that will add to your knowledge and keep you updated on the latest technology. A change in the way you think will impact your life. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Live up to your promises and stick to honoring any resolutions you set. It's always difficult when you start something new, but with a little patience and determination, positive results will turn into the masterpiece you envisioned. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Put your energy into your reputation, money matters and professional gains. Use your intelligence and connections to get things set up and ready for new beginnings. Think big, but instill common sense in whatever you choose to do. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Emotional matters will stand in your way. Clear up any misunderstandings or regrets you have before you try to move forward. A clean slate will ease stress and spark your imagination. Confusion and delays while traveling can be expected. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are energetic, intense and proactive. You are imaginative and forceful.

*To submit astrological questions to the "**Dear Eugenia**" column, visit **Eugenialast.com**, or join Eugenia on **Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.***

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		2			5			
			1		2			
3		4		5		8		6
	7						1	
		6		3		9		
	3						8	
7		1		8		3		4
			2		6			
		5				7		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/03

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Monday's SUDOKU Answer

8	3	9	7	4	2	5	1	6
6	1	2	5	9	8	3	4	7
5	4	7	1	6	3	2	8	9
1	2	8	4	3	7	9	6	5
4	9	3	6	5	1	8	7	2
7	5	6	2	8	9	4	3	1
9	7	1	8	2	4	6	5	3
2	8	5	3	7	6	1	9	4
3	6	4	9	1	5	7	2	8

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

CURLING UP BY THE FIRE Solution: 8 letters

Y	P	P	A	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	S	O	F	A
G	I	R	L	F	R	I	E	N	D	N	I	B	A	C
N	L	A	U	G	H	I	N	G	N	O	V	E	L	R
I	L	O	P	E	E	H	U	G	S	I	B	N	D	E
N	O	C	G	I	C	F	L	M	E	S	Y	I	O	L
E	W	O	E	N	H	A	A	A	I	I	E	W	O	A
V	S	C	V	M	I	S	R	S	V	V	N	N	M	X
E	E	O	O	L	S	C	N	B	O	E	M	B	K	C
C	U	R	L	A	E	O	S	O	M	L	I	C	S	I
S	D	H	G	C	B	F	S	I	I	E	H	A	L	T
E	N	E	U	O	O	F	L	K	N	T	C	N	U	N
M	O	A	O	D	R	E	E	C	R	I	A	D	M	A
A	F	K	C	E	D	E	E	T	S	A	M	L	B	M
G	S	O	C	K	S	L	P	E	T	S	P	E	E	O
E	S	U	O	P	S	R	E	P	P	I	L	S	R	R

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Last Friday's Answer: Countdown

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Pro se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In the matter of the Adoption of:

D.H.C.S. (April 05, 2010)
D.H.C.S. (September 07, 2011)
Minor Child

BY:
James Rangamar Rabauliman
Petitioner

FCD-AD-CIVIL ACTION NO. 18-0452

NOTICE OF HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on 1st day of April, 2019 at 9:00am on the 2nd Floor of the Marianas Business Plaza, before the Honorable Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dates this 21st day of December, 2018.

/s/ Patrick V. Diaz,
Deputy Clerk of Court

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

OPENING DATE: December 17,2018 • **CLOSING DATE:** January 03, 2019
TIME: 10:00 A.M.

NMHC JVA No.	Positions:	Salary:
2018-013	Accountant I	PL30-01 to PL30-05 $22,576.96.44 to $27,437.44-per annum

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be picked up, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan during regular business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447/6866 or by email to jjmuna@nmhc.gov.mp. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

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With Colts' playoff drought over, Luck takes center stage

AP
Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck (12) calls a play against the Tennessee Titans in the first half of an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 30, 2018, in Nashville, Tenn.

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Andrew Luck spent last January just like the previous two — watching playoff games from afar and hoping for a chance to return.

This weekend he's officially back.

After a coaching change, a major roster overhaul and nearly two years removed from shoulder surgery, the Indianapolis Colts quarterback celebrated New Year's Day by prepping for Saturday's wild-card game in his hometown of Houston.

"I'm having fun and that's the most important thing," Luck said Tuesday. "The fact that we get to play another game in the playoffs, that's stinking awesome and I think a small part of us understands how special it's been so far. I've said this before, it's been fulfilling. But satisfied? No, not at all."

At least not until he wins a championship.

Until then, proving the doubters wrong must suffice.

While some questioned whether Luck would ever be the same after missing the entire 2017 season to rehab from a partially torn labrum in his throwing shoulder, many believed the injury would prevent him from ever fulfilling the championship expectations applied to the top overall pick in the 2012 draft and Peyton Manning's hand-picked replacement.

Now, after a three-year playoff drought, a healthier Luck seems to have the Colts back on track.

He produced single-season career highs in almost every significant passing category this season and finished second in the NFL with 39 touchdown passes — one short of his total from 2014 when the Colts previously made the playoffs.

Traditional stats reflect only part of Luck's tale.

He helped the Colts (10-6) rebound from an abysmal start by leading them to nine wins in their final 10 games. Indy became only the third team in league history to reach the postseason after going 1-5.

And for the second time, Luck made the prognosticators look silly by taking a team that was lightly regarded by some to the playoffs. Those who were around for Luck's first act, in 2012, haven't forgotten how it felt then or how familiar it all seems now as he prepares for his fourth playoff appearance.

"He's doing a great job," receiver T.Y. Hilton said. "He's having fun and after all the work he's put into it, he's looking good."

What Luck has done best this season is adapt to a continually evolving environment.

First-year coach Frank Reich wanted Luck to get the ball out of his hands quicker and exploit the mismatches created by his cadre of tight ends. He's done both.

Luck also thrived behind a revamped offensive line, which regularly starts two rookies. He was sacked a league-low 18 times while running back Marlon Mack ran for more than 100 yards four times, providing Luck with the kind of balance team owner Jim Irsay long envisioned.

Luck quickly acclimated to the rotating receivers, throwing TD passes to 13 different players. It could come in handy against the AFC South champion Texans (11-5), too.

Hilton injured his ankle Dec. 8 and has spent more time getting treatment than practicing over the past three weeks. But he has yet to miss a game, continues to make big plays and is eager to return to Houston where he already has four 100-yard games, including nine catches for 199 yards in the Colts' previous visit.

"That's probably why it's starting to feel better," Hilton joked before sitting out Tuesday's walkthrough.

He's not the only receiver battling injuries. Ryan Grant (ankle) and Zach Pascal (knee) both sat out Tuesday while Daurice Fountain (ankle) and Dontrelle Inman (shoulder/finger)—did limited work.

All of it could make Luck's job more complicated Saturday.

But with a more balanced attack, a rapidly improving defense and a chance to jump back on the postseason stage for the first time since "Deflategate", Luck embraces the opportunity to let everyone else see what he and his teammates can do.

Broncos offer mixed bag for next head coach

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP)—Whoever replaces Vance Joseph as the Denver Broncos' fourth head coach in six seasons may not find a franchise quarterback awaiting him.

What he will find is a roster packed with promise.

The Broncos (6-10) had a terrific infusion of youth last season led by running back Phillip Lindsay , the first undrafted offensive rookie ever to earn a Pro Bowl berth, although wrist surgery will keep him from playing in the all-star game.

General manager John Elway's highly touted 2018 draft class features first-rounder Bradley Chubb, receivers DaeSean Hamilton and Courtland Sutton, linebacker Josey Jewell, running back Royce Freeman and cornerback Isaac Yiadom.

NFL players typically make their biggest jump between their first and second seasons, so this group anticipates a big "leap year" in 2019, and they're pledging to lead the franchise out of its three-year playoff drought, too.

"Broncos country doesn't have to worry about us going 6-10 again," Sutton insisted. "Our core is going to be so strong and so tight, we're going to show up and we're going to go to work every single day, every week. And we're not going to leave it up for chance in any games."

Chubb led all NFL rookies by collecting a dozen sacks, something he said was just an appetizer.

"I'll definitely make a bigger impact" next season, Chubb said, "whether it be in the run game, the pass game, whatever it takes."

With the middling Case Keenum at quarterback, the biggest personnel attraction for head coaching candidates is the league's best pass-rushing duo of Chubb and Von Miller.

"I'd like to think that I'm a coach's dream," Miller said. "We've got a lot of big-time players here. We've got Bradley Chubb, who's coming into his second year."

The pair combined for 26½ sacks in their first season together.

Star cornerback Chris Harris Jr., who is in line for a big contract extension this offseason, said he hopes the new coach injects some juice into the playbook so it can catch up to the likes of Patrick Mahomes in Kansas City, Baker Mayfield in Cleveland and Lamar Jackson in Baltimore.

Harris said the Broncos have been stagnant since winning Super Bowl 50 three years ago on the strength of a historically good defense and they've watched other teams incorporate college game concepts and sweep right past them.

"We kind of just stayed doing the same thing we've been doing since 2015," Harris said. "It's 2019 now. We've got to evolve. We can't do the same thing. I've got to evolve my game. I can't think I'm going to still play the same coverage and the way I played in 2015 or 2013. I have to evolve my game and we have to evolve, too."

He wants the new coaching staff to incorporate the RPO (run-pass option) philosophies on both offense and defense, and Elway is on board.

Aside from the arduous search for a franchise QB, the Broncos have an ongoing ownership squabble and a demanding general manager who wants a quick turnaround, mandates immediate results and won't sign off on a slow rebuild "because that sounds like an excuse."

"I hate to lose," Elway said .

The next hire will be the Broncos' sixth coach in 12 years.

Players hate to see coaches fired, but at least they're paid

DENVER (AP)—Every year, while a dozen NFL head coaches are preparing their teams for the playoffs, nearly as many coaches are called into their general manager's office and told they're fired for not being one of those dozen coaches who are preparing their teams for the playoffs.

Eight coaches lost their jobs in 2018, including Mike McCarthy in Green Bay and Hue Jackson in Cleveland, long before the holidays rolled around.

A half-dozen more finished the season before getting their walking papers, including Todd Bowles of the Jets and Dirk Koetter of the Buccaneers on Sunday night.

On Monday, they were joined by Marvin Lewis in Cincinnati, Vance Joseph in Denver, Adam Gase in Miami and Steve Wilks in Arizona.

Joseph drew an especially strong reaction in the Broncos' solemn locker room, where players who had fought hard for him realized they had let down their beloved coach by not pulling out enough of those close games in a 6-10 season.

However, linebacker Brandon Marshall said out loud what was surely on plenty of players' minds in Green Bay, Cleveland, New York, Tampa, Cincinnati, Miami and Phoenix, too.

Asked if the cold reality of the win-or-go-home NFL really hits home on the annual —in Denver it's become biennial—day of reckoning for head coaches, Marshall said:

"I know how everything goes. I've been fired before a bunch of times. One of the saddest days in the NFL is cut day for the 53-man roster. That kind of sets in more. But don't coaches get their full salary regardless? So (shoot). You know what I'm saying? If we're getting fired, I wish we got OUR damn salaries.

"So, it sucks for him," Marshall added. "But he's a good coach. He'll find work. But at least he gets the rest of his money."

In Joseph's case, that's about $6 million, some of which will be offset by the salary he'll earn with his next team.

Leonard scores career-high 45, Raptors beat Jazz

TORONTO (AP)—Kawhi Leonard was so good Tuesday night, Raptors coach Nick Nurse just wanted to enjoy the show.

Leonard scored a career-high 45 points, Pascal Siakam had a career-best 28 points with 10 rebounds, and Toronto beat the Utah Jazz 122-116.

"That's good, we all got to witness that live and in person," Nurse said of Leonard's outburst. "He was phenomenal. I've kind of been waiting for one of these nights where he makes them all."

Norman Powell scored a season-high 14 points, and the Raptors won their fourth straight at home despite playing without All-Star guard Kyle Lowry (sore back) and center Jonas Valanciunas (dislocated left thumb).

"The way he's playing right now is really big for our team with a lot of guys out," Powell said of Leonard.

Leonard shot 16 for 22 overall, missing all three attempts from 3-point range, and went 13 for 17 at the free-throw line. He said he wasn't aware of his scoring achievement until after the game.

"I try to stay in the moment and keep competing every possession and not worry about myself, just try to get a team win," Leonard said.

It was the third 40-point game of Leonard's career, including a 43-point effort against Memphis in Game 4 of the first round in April 2017.

Leonard has scored 20 or more points in a career-best 14 straight games.

Jae Crowder scored a career-high 30 points, Derrick Favors had 21 and Donovan Mitchell scored 19 as the Jazz dropped to 10-12 on the road and 18-20 overall.

"Jae was hot," Jazz coach Quin Snyder said. "It's unfortunate that we didn't capitalize on the night that he had."

Utah's Rudy Gobert scored 16 points, and Ricky Rubio had 14.

Leonard made all seven of his field-goal attempts in the third quarter and added five foul shots. His 19 points were the second most in any quarter by a Raptors player this season.

"He scored in the post, he scored in isolations, he scored going to the rim over Rudy," Snyder said. "Eventually we started hitting him when he walked across half court. The biggest thing was we put him on the line."

After making two 3-pointers in the first half, the Raptors connected on their first three long-range shots of the third quarter, turning a two-point halftime deficit into a 12-point edge midway through the quarter.

Bucks 121, Pistons 98

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks started the new year much like the finished the last one.

Antetokounmpo threw down a spectacular one-handed dunk, Brook Lopez continued to show off his long-range shooting prowess and the Bucks cruised past the Detroit Pistons. Milwaukee has won four straight and eight of nine and is an NBA-best 26-10.

Antetokounmpo had just 15 points, but his slam over Jon Leuer was the highlight of the night. Antetokounmpo blew past Andre Drummond, jumped and reached his right arm over a leaping Leuer for the slam during the first quarter.

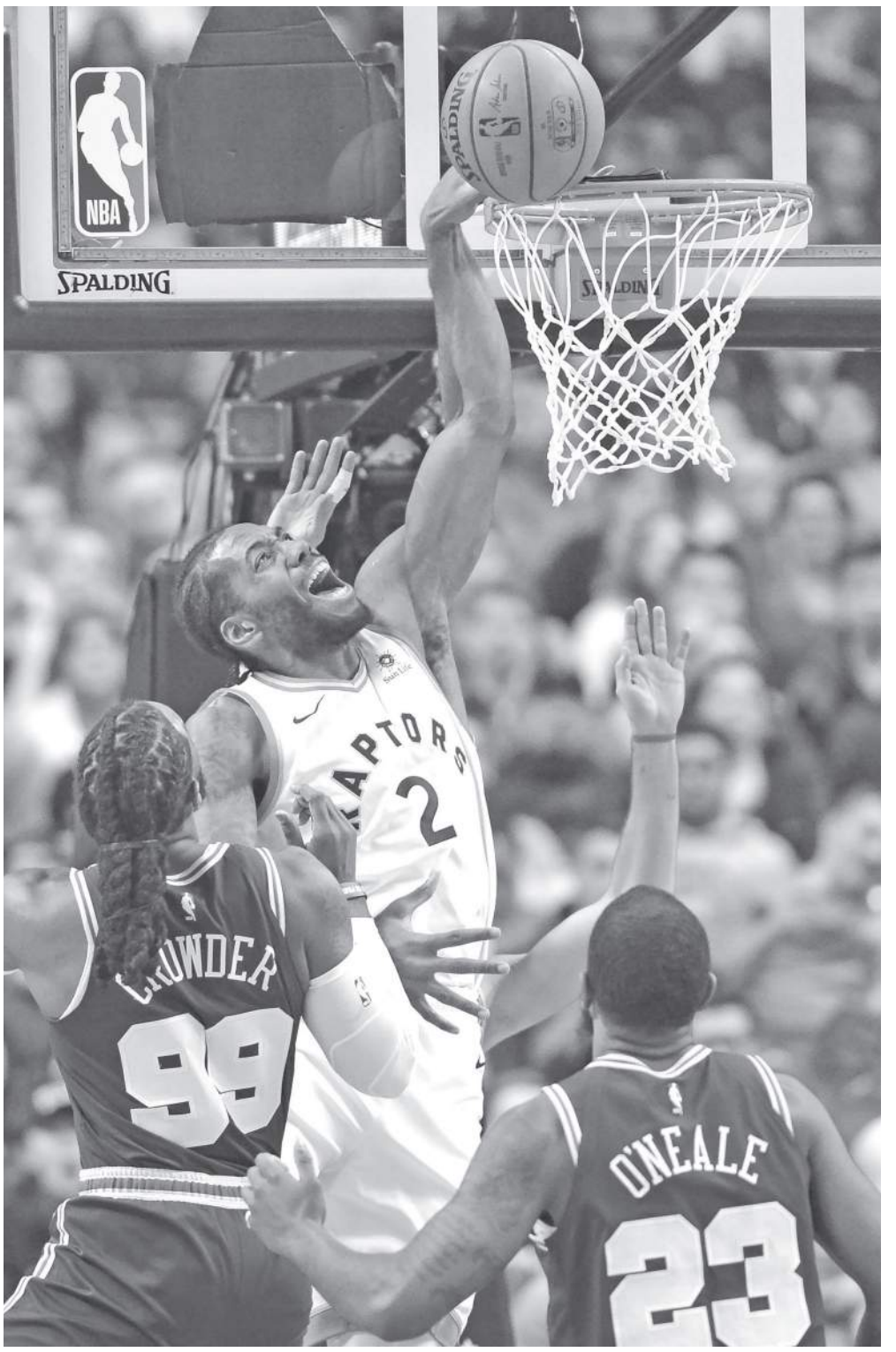
"It's fun to have nights like this," Antetokounmpo said. "Everybody has energy and plays hard."

Khris Middleton had 22 points and Eric Bledsoe had 18 for Milwaukee. Lopez had 25 points and made 7 of 12 from 3-point range, capping off the night by nailing a shot from beyond the sideline hashmark in the fourth.

"I was feeling good." Lopez said. "We were moving the ball really well and I was just trying to space the floor. My guys were making great passes to me all night. They're so good at attacking the basket, drawing people and kicking out."

Blake Griffin had 29 points and nine rebounds, and Reggie Jackson scored 19 points for Detroit, which fell to 16-19.

After leading 92-73 after three quarters, the Bucks built a 28-point lead midway through the fourth.



AP

Toronto Raptors forward Kawhi Leonard (2) is fouled going to the net by Utah Jazz forward Jae Crowder (99) as forward Royce O'Neale (23) watches during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2019, in Toronto.

Trail Blazers 113, Kings 108 OT

In Sacramento, Damian Lillard woke up Tuesday morning feeling out of sorts and didn't get much better through the first three quarters against Sacramento. When Portland needed him the most, however, their All-Star guard came through in a big way.

It wasn't necessarily Michael Jordan dropping 38 on Utah in Game 5 of the 1997 NBA Finals but it was more than enough to help the Trail Blazers kick off the new year the right way.

Lillard shook off a sluggish night to score five of his 25 points in overtime, and the Portland rallied after blowing a 14-point halftime lead to beat the Kings.

"They outplayed us for most of the second half," a weary Lillard said. "At that point you have to come together as a group and kind of forget about everything that's happened."

Nuggets 115, Knicks 108

In Denver, Nikola Jokic's teammates are definitely hard to impress.

He bounced a rebound off a player as he's falling out of bounds and later delivered a no-look pass that completely froze a defender. He also finished with a triple-double.

"Another day at the office," Gary Harris said. "That's what he does. It's one of those days again."

Jokic had 19 points, 14 rebounds and 15 assists, including that late no-look pass to wrap things up, as the Denver Nuggets kept right on rolling by beating the New York Knicks 115-108 on Tuesday night for their ninth straight home victory.

It was the Jokic Show with the 7-footer posting his third triple-double of the season. Jokic did a little bit of everything, including a heads-up play with 1:21 left and Denver leading 111-105. He grabbed a rebound and threw it off the back of Tim Hardaway Jr. as he was tumbling out of bounds. With about 30 seconds left, Jokic delivered a no-look pass to Malik Beasley to seal the win.

Does anything surprise the Nuggets when it comes to him?

"Nah," said Beasley, who scored a career-high 23 points.

As for the "M-V-P" chants at the end of the game, Jokic definitely heard them and appreciated the support.

"But let's go step by step," Jokic said.

PGA Tour to experiment with interviews during the round

KAPALUA, Hawaii (AP)—The PGA Tour might be taking another step toward connecting players with television viewers.

Several years ago, it asked players in contention on the weekend to allow for TV interviews before their rounds, usually as they were arriving or leaving the practice range. Now they are looking for volunteers willing to do interviews on the course during their rounds.

It's in the experimental stage at the Sentry Tournament of Champions, and the willingness to take part depends on the player.

Brooks Koepka, the reigning PGA Tour player of the year, nixed the idea last year in Shanghai but said he might be OK with it now.

"Don't they do that on the Champions Tour?" he asked.

Justin Thomas? Not so much.

Thomas talks plenty during his round, usually to himself or with caddie Jimmy Johnson. The idea of stopping for a quick interview was not appealing to him.

"I've just been asked about it," he said. "I said, 'No.' It's not me. I do a lot of self-talking. That's mine and Jimmy's time, whether we're talking about whatever, or even the next shot. For me, there's no benefit. It's only going to make me look worse."

Such interviews are not likely to occur in the final round, and PGA Tour officials are sensitive to the timing of the interviews. A quick spot with Dustin Johnson after his 432-yard drive came within 6 inches of the cup last year at Kapalua might be ideal. Right after a three-putt bogey from 10 feet might not be.

Marc Leishman has experience doing on-course interviews when he plays in Australia, and he didn't mind the concept.

"If they do end up having them, my advice would be to have someone who has played on tour to do it, to be a little sensitive of the questions and the timing of the interview," Leishman said. "But anything where you can be more accessible to the viewers is a good thing. We want to bring more people to the game. It might be a way to give more insight to what we're thinking at the time."

Rory McIlroy, meanwhile, isn't likely to be among the candidates. He said he has not been approached by the PGA Tour about his willingness to do short interviews in the middle of his round. But he made it clear where he stood.

"I've been approached in Europe because they've done it for a couple of years," McIlroy said. "And I've said, 'No,' every single time."

Meanwhile, two days before the new year, Bubba Watson already was trying to bone up on the news Rules of Golf.

Some of the pins at Kapalua are set on slopes over the weekend, and Watson had video taken of a putt on the par-3 eighth green in which he purposely hammered it past the hole, and then watched it trickle down the slope and into the cup. His caddie, Ted Scott, tended the pin on the putt. As it rolled back toward the cup, Scott wasn't sure whether to put the pin back in the cup. He finally did just as the ball went in the hole.

Watson posted it on Twitter and asked the USGA: "Is this a penalty? I'm an amateur when it comes to the new rules."

In this case, the answer would appear to be yes. The decision to remove (or tend) the flag stick, or leave it in, must be made before the stroke.

Federer wins epic match versus Serena

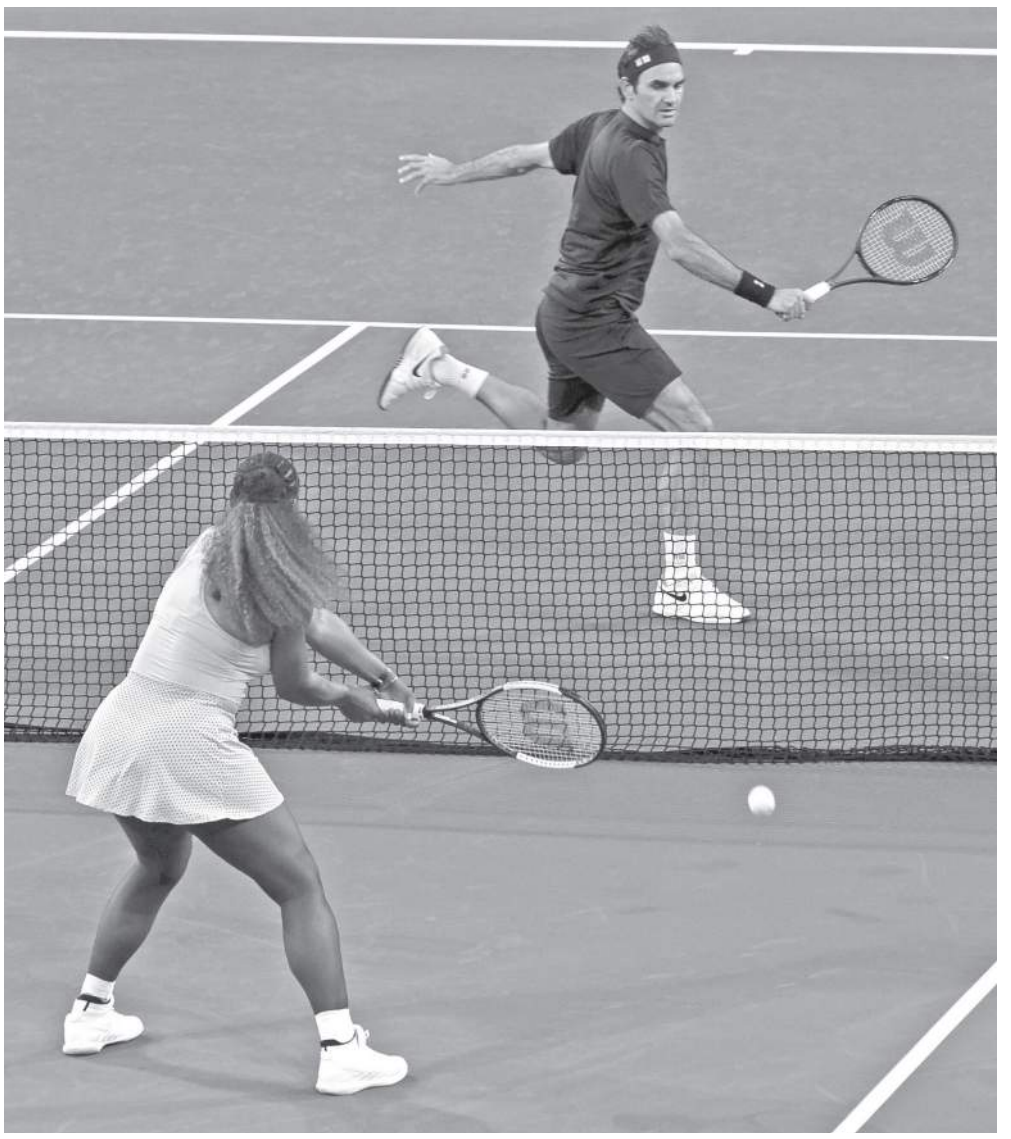
PERTH, Australia (AP)—Roger Federer won the bragging rights over fellow tennis great Serena Williams as they faced each other on court for the first time on Tuesday, with Federer spearheading Switzerland's 4-2, 4-3 (3) victory over the United States in a mixed doubles decider at the Hopman Cup.

"I was nervous returning (Williams' serve). People talk about her serve so much and I see why it is such a wonderful serve because you just can't read it," Federer said. "It was great fun. You see how determined and focused she is, and I love that about her."

Federer and playing partner Belinda Bencic overcame Williams and Frances Tiafoe in the Fast4 format as Switzerland beat the U.S. 2-1 in front of a 14,000 capacity crowd.

Federer and Williams shared a good-natured interview afterward and then engaged in a selfie.

"It was so fun. This is super cool that we get to do it at such a pinnacle point of our careers," Williams said. "I was so excited, and literally it was the match of my career. Just playing someone so great, and someone you admire so much, and a match that actually means something."



AP

Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball to Serena Williams of the United states during their mixed doubles match at the Hopman Cup in Perth, Australia, Tuesday, 1, Jan. 2019.

Federer and Williams, both 37, have won 43 Grand Slam singles titles between them.

Defending champion Switzerland will qualify for Saturday's final if it beats Greece on Thursday in Group B. The United States, which lost to Greece on Monday, can't now advance.

The much-hyped contest quickly lived up to its billing with Federer almost running down Williams' smash into the open court. Williams and Federer served strongly and were unable to return any of each other's serves in the first set.

Federer's sublime touch at the net proved decisive as he moved closer to a record third Hopman Cup title.

Williams grabbed at her right shoulder on several occasions late in the second set but played down any injury concern.

"It was such a quick turnaround, I didn't have enough time to reload the cannon. It's totally normal," she said.

Earlier, Federer beat Tiafoe 6-4, 6-1 in the men's singles before Williams' 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Bencic.

Williams started fast in the women's singles against Bencic—with an early break to storm to a 3-0 lead—before an error-strewn performance ensued as Bencic recovered to win the opener.

The 23-time Grand Slam singles champion fought back in a tight second set and captured the pivotal break in the 10th game. A flustered Bencic slammed her racket on the court as the match leveled and she never seriously threatened in the decider.

Federer was made to work during a tough first set before overwhelming the 20-year-old Tiafoe and taking control by winning seven straight games.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion needed just 57 minutes to claim his fourth straight victory over the rising American player.

Switzerland swept Britain in its opener when Federer had a masterclass win over British player Cameron Norrie in his opening match. Federer has lost just seven games in his first two matches of the round-robin tournament.

Federer's appearances at the past two Hopman Cups laid the groundwork for successful Australian Open campaigns.

Nadal's plan for 2019 revolves around quality, not quantity

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)—Rafael Nadal wants to make a little go a long way in 2019.

The No. 2-ranked Nadal, in Brisbane preparing to play his first competitive match since retiring from the U.S. Open semifinals last September, found some positives out of an injury-interrupted season that he wants to apply to this year.

"I want to feel myself competitive every week that I am on court and I want to keep fighting for the things that really make me feel alive, you know, for the things that motivate me," Nadal told a news conference Tuesday at the Brisbane International. "Be competitive all the weeks that I am playing."

That doesn't mean he wants to play every week. It just means he's going to be a lot more selective. Based on results in 2018—he entered nine tournaments, retired from two but still won five titles and had a 45-4 win-loss record—the 32-year-old Spaniard has an outstanding success rate when he's fit.

So regaining the No. 1 ranking is far less of a priority than adding to his 17 major titles.

"I prefer to be No. 1 than be No. 2, and I prefer to be No. 2 than No. 5. That's obvious," he said. "But my main goal is to stay healthy, stay happy and try to play as long as possible."

Nadal is scheduled to play Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in the second round in Brisbane on Thursday. He said he plans to be "on court with a positive feeling," but only if he's feeling fit. The Australian Open starts Jan. 14.

"After the surgeries, I don't want to step back. I want to move forward," he said. "After all I suffered last year in terms of injuries, I don't want to do mistakes in terms of playing without being 100 percent."

A right knee injury forced Nadal to retire from his U.S. Open semifinal, and he had ankle surgery at the start of November. He also missed big chunks of previous seasons because of injuries, but doesn't think his body is letting him down.

"I really believe that I keep having tennis to play in my career, and I really feel that my body is not going worse every year," he said.

He said injuries, "just sometimes happen." But he is also clear that he does not want to suffer the way he did last season.

"That mentally kills you," he said.

Consequently, he'll keep his physical condition in mind more than he has before. And 2018 will be his benchmark.

"I won five events out of nine that I played," he said. "It was a great level of tennis every time that I was on court. So that's great news. I enjoyed it a lot. I achieved things that were amazing for me. So, yeah, tough year in terms of injuries. (But) in terms of tennis level, enjoying every time I had the chance to be on court, it was a great year.

AGAPE

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lan Zhao, Henry Xiong, and Hu En Ze recorded the winning time of 1:27:42, while the group of Agape runners who started the Torchbearers' streak in the island relay logged 1:29:42 in 2015.

"Every year, our goal is to break our record in the previous race. That's the challenge to all Agape runners," said Chen, who joined the island relay for the third consecutive year and won back-to-back in the open division category. "We also train at least three weeks before the race so we are in good shape."

"Most of us who did the race for the first time were kind of nervous, so we were a bit slow. But, the moment we learned how to pace ourselves, we are able to adjust and get better times," he added.

Chen and company led from start to finish, reaching the Last Command Post nearly three minutes ahead of Team Yutu. Eleina Santos, Bailey Spaeth, Ketson "Jack" Kabiriel, Whit Altizer, and Keith Longuski made up Team Yutu and they clocked in at 1:26:10 to settle for the runner-up honors in the open division. Agape B rounded out the Top 3 in the open category after checking in at 1:34:21, while Agape C recorded 1:35:52 to lord it over in the youth division. Easton Tang, Ray Qi, Elizabeth Xu, Simon Shan, and Caleb Dai suited up for Agape C.

Other finishers in the team event were Robin Hoods (1:37:43), Tamio Club (1:39:49), Agape D (1:41:55), Hoopaholics (1:51:32), Team SPC (1:52:12), and TRAC Team 1 (1:54:45).

In the individual race, Anthony Fruit was the overall finisher after making it to the Last Command Post at the 1:47:24 mark, while Kaylee Heath and Heather Kennedy tallied 1:48.46 and 1:54:29, respectively, to round out the Top 3.

GUAM

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last finals match of the day—the heavyweight class (201 lbs and above)—and outclassed Agda. The win allowed Cannon to make up for his failed bid in the light heavyweight division (186 lbs to 200 lbs), which Agda earlier ruled after downing the Guam fighter and Shane Alvarez.

In the middleweight class (166 lbs to 185 lbs), Carbullido was the last man standing, beating Alvarez and five others.

Alvarez, after falling short in the Gi category, redeemed himself in the No Gi middleweight division. He survived the winner-take-all competition that also featured his father and event promoter, Cuki, Nuique, Salas, Sangalang, Ken Tanzawa, and Taitingfong.

Taitingfong earlier participated in the lightweight (100 lbs to 145 lbs) contest and won the division after beating Santos and Piling Terlaje.

NMIVA

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guchi said.

NMIVA received Kai's request a couple of weeks before the Hope for Tomorrow Youth Beach Volleyball Fundraiser took place (last month) and the group is more than happy to continue the spirit of community partnership and help with rebuilding in our community. Incidentally, NMIVA used to host a grass volleyball event every January from 2009 to 2016. NMIVA asked Kai if they would like to try hosting a reverse co-ed tournament for their fundraiser and they agreed.

"Our NMIVA working group is dedicated to reviving the NMIVA calendar of events. The timing of getting our working group organized and then the recent storm was tragic, but we are trying to not let that stop us," said Peterka.

This Saturday's competition is a 4-person event with each team allowed to have as much as six players. Registration fee is only $10 per player. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

TanHoldings FC vs Southern Cobra

PHOTOS By: GUAM FOOTBAL ASSOCIATION

TanHoldings FC Girls U15's Kaithlynn Chavez, right, battles a Southern Cobra player for possession during their game in the 2018 Guam-NMI Friendlies held at the Guam Football Association National Training Center in Dededo late last month.

TanHoldings FC and Southern Cobra players and game officials pose for a photo before the start of the match.

TanHoldings FC's Jenny Anne Capayas faces two Southern Cobra defenders.

TanHoldings FC's Mary Joy Aniana, left, dribbles in front of a Southern Cobra defender.

TanHoldings FC players and officials huddle after the game.

TanHoldings keeper Emalyn Aniana, right, kicks the ball.

A TanHoldings FC player deflects the ball.

TanHoldings FC players bow to the crowd.

Leonard scores career-high 45, Raptors beat Jazz

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

KAN PACIFIC POOL **CLOSED**

Agape runners keep streak

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

For the fourth straight year, Agape Christian School runners topped the Northern Marianas Athletics Annual Christmas Island Relay.

The Torchbearers' William Chen, Kobe Yang, Peter Wang, Jonathan Xiong, and Arthur Liang completed the 13.7-mile race from Pacific Islands Club in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi at the 1:23:35 mark to rule the 37th edition of NMA's season-ending event held last Saturday. The Agape A runners also posted the school's fastest time in the competition and the best in the last 10 years of the event (the race record is under the 1:20:00 mark), according to NMA secretary general Robin Sapong.

Agape A eclipsed the 1:26:30 Chen, Wang, Xiong, Leo Li, and David Cai registered in Agape's 2017 victory. In 2016, the quartet of Jason Wang, Caleb Wang, Al-

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Agape Christian School A runners celebrate their victory in last Saturday's 37th Annual Christmas Island Relay.

NMIVA holds first tournament this Saturday

Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association will start the season with the staging of the 2019 Kickoff Reverse Co-Ed Grass Volleyball Tournament this Saturday at the Navy Hill Field.

The competition that will begin at 8am is a fundraiser with proceeds going to Mt. Carmel School, which sustained massive damage from Super Typhoon Yutu.

NMIVA president Laurie Peterka said that Kai Higuchi of MCS Class of 2017 reached out to the federation in November to seek assistance with hosting a fundraiser to help create an event on behalf of the Mt. Carmel School Alumni.

"As a college student, there is really not much that I could do to provide relief besides bringing people together to come up with something. That's when I decided to start up a volleyball fundraiser with Seokjun Yun and Dayna Macaranas. Although we had some general ideas, we were not quite sure of how to run an actual fundraiser. That's when NMIVA came into play and guided us through every step of the way. It was amazing how welcoming and eager they were to help us out," Hi-

See NMIVA on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Mt. Carmel School's Louisa Han bends for a return during a Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association-organized tournament last month at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand court. This Saturday, NMIVA will hold a reverse co-ed grass tournament in Navy Hill.

Guam fighters lead Art of War winners

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Guam's Peter Carbullido and Phoenix Cannon stood out in the Art of War 13: Submission Grappling Tournament held last Saturday at the Trench Tech Gym in Garapan.

Cannon prevailed in the Gi blue belt absolute class, which drew five participants. Cannon won in the finals against Saipan's Franklin Santos. Paulo Sangalang, Giovonni Taitingfong, and Mark Nuique were the other entries in the blue belt absolute.

In the purple belt absolute finale, Carbullido forced Shane "Pikaboo" Alvarez to submission. Completing the winners list in the Gi division was Gordon Salas, who defeated Kier Ada.

Meanwhile, Carbullido and Cannon also competed in the Gi division and were victorious, too.

Cannon was featured in the

See GUAM on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Guam's Peter Carbullido, left, and Saipan's Shane Alvarez wait for each other's move during their finals match in the Gi purple belt absolute division of the Art of War 13: Submission Grappling Tournament held last Saturday at the Trench Tech Gym in Garapan.